

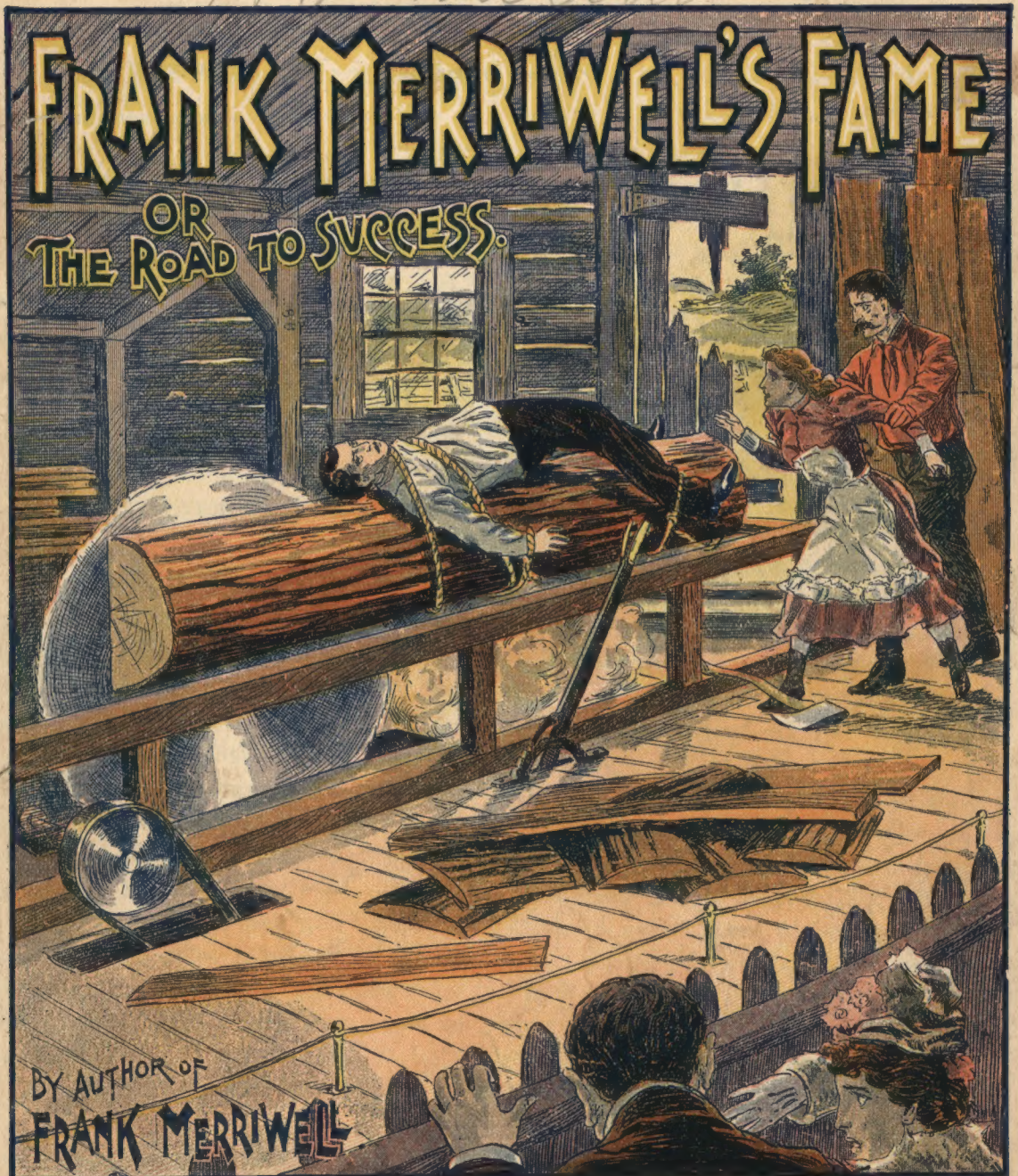
TIP TOP WEEKLY

"An ideal publication for the American Youth"

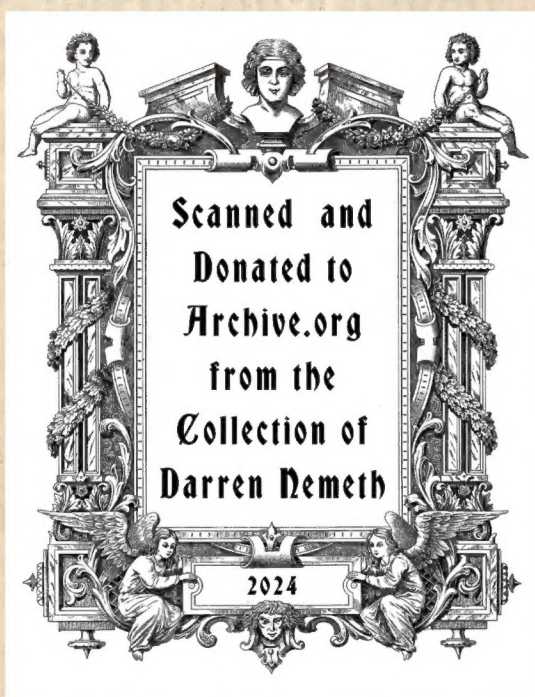
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No. 138.

Price, Five Cents.



"LET ME GO!" SCREAMED ELSIE. "YOU WRETCH! HE WILL BE KILLED!"



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FRANK MERRIWELL'S FAME; OR, THE ROAD TO SUCCESS.

By the Author of "FRANK MERRIWELL."

CHAPTER I.

AFTER THE FIRST ACT.

"Author! Author!"

It was the opening night of Frank Merriwell's play, "John Smith of Montana," and the theatre of the Missouri town where the play was produced for the first time was packed.

The curtain had gone down on the great sensational sawmill scene at the end of the third act, and the audience had roared its approval, being roused as no audience had ever before been aroused in that town.

Again and again Frank and Elsie Bellwood had been called in front of the curtain to bow before the applauding people, and it seemed that the spectators never would be satisfied.

And now they were shouting for the author of the play.

The advertising had announced that "John Smith of Montana" was a new drama, and would be produced in that town for the first time. Having by their applause placed their stamp of approval on the play and the leading actors, the audience was determined to have a look at the writer of the piece, not knowing that the star of the cast was the author.

Behind the curtain there was nearly as excitement as in front.

The people in the cast had been in hard luck nearly all the season, barnstorming in the Middle West, and there had been many doubts about the outcome of the new venture.

Now, however, these doubts were dispelled, and the actors and actresses saw visions of a prosperous finish of the season, big houses, rushing business, and the "ghost" walking regularly every week.

They danced and laughed, shaking hands with each other. The leading lady, sedate

"Clif Faraday's Disappearance; or, The Naval Cadet's Double Championship"—No. 30 True Blue

and dignified in her part on the stage, did a wild and fantastic skirt dance, while the "first old man," bent, tottering, gray-haired, stood on his head and cracked his heels together in the air.

They rushed at Frank and overwhelmed him with congratulations, and they assured Parker Folansbee, the backer of the company, that he would have money to burn at the end of the season.

"Hear those people shout!" exclaimed Douglas Dunton. "In all my experience on the road I have never struck anything like this. It beats."

Roscoe Havener, calm but satisfied, forced his way to Merriwell's side, taking hold of Frank with both hands.

"You've got to go out again," he said.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Frank. "I have been out there and bowed till my back is lame. This is too much!"

"Listen," directed the stage manager.

"Author! author! author!" shouted the audience.

"That means you," said Havener. "You'll have to go out and make a speech."

"A speech?"

"Yes."

"Oh, come——"

"You can't get out of it."

"You do it, Havener, old man. You tell them that——"

"It won't go. They'll never let up till the author comes out, and they know he is the actor."

Frank had made speeches before, but never in his life had he felt so "shaky" as he did just then. He had been keyed up to a high tension by the uncertainty of it all, and now it seemed that the relapse had come. The play was a success beyond doubt, and his overstrained nerves were quivering so that

his teeth almost chattered, and his knees felt as if they were knocking together.

And now he must make a speech.

"They don't know the author is with the piece," he said, weakly. "My name was not advertised as the author."

"If it had been they might have been satisfied by your repeated appearances before the curtain. Go ahead, Merriwell. This is the first time I've ever known you to have an attack of the flunks."

Frank stiffened up.

"All right," he said. "But I may break down."

"You won't. I'll risk you."

Havener pulled the side of the curtain back and Merry walked out. A sea of faces lay before him. There was a fluttering motion everywhere as the spectators clapped their hands.

"You're all right!" shouted a loud voice. "Bring out the feller that writ the play."

In that moment all Frank's nerve and assurance returned to him. Never was he cooler than when he bowed, smiled, and opened his mouth to speak.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "permit me, in behalf of the entire company and the manager, to thank you for this gracious reception. As the play is absolutely new and this is the first time it has been acted before from the manager down should be extremely anxious as to the outcome, for we felt that your verdict must decide the fate of the piece. As author of the play, it is possible that I was more anxious than anybody else."

"Hey?" shouted the same loud voice from the midst of the orchestra chairs. "Did you write the play?"

"I did," bowed Frank. "I know it is not a great play, by any means, but it has given me unbounded pleasure to know it has pleased you, ladies and gentlemen. It is not

A Pitchfork is a Dangerous Weapon When Wielded by a Strong Arm. True Blue No. 30

easy to satisfy an audience of such taste and intelligence; and, having satisfied you, it now seems absolutely certain that the piece will be successful on the road."

"Take it to New York," cried the same loud speaker in the audience. "Give them something worth seeing there."

"Thank you," smiled Merry. "It is hardly probable that I shall be able to follow your advice, but still it is impossible to foretell what may happen. The play was written for a road piece, and if it succeeds as such I shall be satisfied. It is my first attempt at play-writing, and so it is possible I may be able to do something better in the future. Again thanking you for your patronage and more than kind reception of the play, and hoping to meet you all again at some future time, we will now prepare for the final act, which I trust will meet with your approval, as have those preceding it."

The little speech was conventional in many ways, but it satisfied the audience, and was, perhaps, all that could have been expected of Frank under the circumstances and on such short notice.

Anyway, the audience gave him another rousing burst of applause, and Havener complimented him when he retired behind the curtain.

"You did it like an old stager, Merriwell," he said.

"I am afraid I did," laughed Frank.

"Afraid?"

"Yes."

"Why, what——"

"I tried to think of something new and original to say, but all I could seem to think of sounded exactly like other speeches I have heard made before the curtain."

"Oh, that's it. Well, you were shaking all over when you went out; but you rattled it off as easy as falling down, and that was re-

markable, considering everything. It is hardly probable that the audience expected you to be original in an impromptu speech, so what's the difference."

Folansbee came up and shook Frank's hand.

"Merriwell," he said, "you're a dandy. You can't object to having your name on the advertising now. I am going to see that it is put on. There, there! I will have my way in this. It's the first time since we went at the piece. I am supposed to be the manager, but, up to date, I have done nothing but say yes to all your plans and proposals. You have done the managing. Now, at least, I am going to have a little something to say. Your name goes on all the house programmes as author after this, and on all the new paper we may secure. That is settled."

It was rather surprising to hear Folansbee assert himself in such a positive manner about anything, but Frank noted that the man's breath smelled of liquor and his face was flushed. Evidently he had been "celebrating" the success of the opening night.

There was one person in the company who did not seem genuinely enthusiastic over the reception the play had been given, and that was Percy Lockwell.

Lockwell had been taken into the company at the earnest solicitation of Folansbee. He was a friend of Philip Scudder, an unprincipled scoundrel who tried to steal the manuscript of Frank's play in St. Louis.

Frank had not liked Lockwell, and he had accepted the fellow at Folansbee's solicitation, hoping Percy might prove so rank that he would have a good excuse in dropping him and filling his place with another man.

But Lockwell was a really good actor in his line, as Frank was forced to acknowledge to himself, and so the fellow was not dropped.

What a Nasty Mass That Was That Gagged His Mouth. See True Blue No. 30.

Now Lockrell made a pretence of congratulating Merry, but Frank read the fellow like an open book, and saw that, although he was a member of the company, Percy was not greatly pleased.

"It's not often an author's first play is received like this," murmured Lockwell. "You should be very proud, Mr. Merriwell, but look out not to get the swelled head."

That was insolence, but Frank quietly returned:

"I scarcely think there is the least danger that I shall have to purchase a larger sized hat, Mr. Lockwell. Don't let it worry you at all, sir."

"All right, no offence," laughed Percy, linking his arm through Folansbee's and drawing the "angel" away.

"I don't like that fellow, Frank," murmured Elsie, slipping up to Merry's side. "How dared he speak to you in such an impudent manner!"

"Oh, that's his way," smiled Merry, nonchalantly.

"Then I think he has very bad manners."

"He is troubled with freshness, that's all."

"It seemed to me that he said what he did in a malicious manner, Frank."

"Oh, he may feel rather envious, but he'll get over that. This is a great night for us, Elsie."

"Isn't it perfectly lovely, Frank? I am so happy!"

"So happy that you are forgetting to change your costume for the next act, which appears in the East, you know. I have to make an entire change, too."

"Goodness! you are right! I had forgotten. I'll have to rush."

She danced across the stage, turning to toss a kiss at him, and ran up a flight of stairs to her dressing room.

"The sweetest little girl in the world!"

muttered Merry, his eyes gleaming. "And she has astonished me as an actress. But the part was written with her in my mind all the time, so it is not wonderful that she fits it so well."

Frank's dressing room was located beneath the stage, and now he hurried down to it. He passed the door of another room, which was standing slightly ajar. As he went by, he saw two persons within the room.

They were Folansbee and Lockwell. The latter was just passing a bottle to the former.

Frank paused a moment, half determined to enter that room and have something to say, but decided that he had no time to waste just then, and plunged into his own room.

"Lockwell knows very well that I have made a rule against drinking while the play is going on," he thought. "It was drinking more than anything else that broke up the old 'Empire Theatre Comedy Company' and landed poor Cassie Lee in St. Louis City Hospital. Mr. Lockwell shall find that my rules are made to be obeyed. Perhaps I cannot keep the members from drinking before and after the play, but I shall try to keep them from doing so while the play is going on."

He tore off his Western rig. A dress suit was ready for him. He fairly threw the shirt on.

Leslie Lawrence came strolling in, smoking a cigarette.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "Just making your shift? Why, it's time for the curtain to go up."

"You know I was delayed by those curtain calls and by the speech. Havener will have to hold the curtain for me."

Frank was rattled, and he got the shirt on wrong side to, much to his dismay.

Conspirators Cry Out for Revenge Against Clif. See No. 30 of True Blue.

"What you need is a good big drink," said Lawrence. "Won't you have one from my flask?"

"Well, hardly!" exclaimed Merry, tearing the shirt off and turning it the other way. "You know, drinking during the performance is against the rules."

"Is it?" murmured Lawrence, unscrewing the cap from his flask and coolly taking a swallow from it.

Frank was astonished.

"What do you mean by this, Lawrence?" he spoke, frigidly. "Are you looking for your release?"

"Not at all. Who made those rules?"

"I did, sir."

"I thought so. Mr. Merriwell, you have written a very good play, and your royalties will make your pockets sag, to say nothing of your salary to fill the star part, but you are not the manager of the company. Mr. Folansbee is the manager, and I hardly think he will make a silly rule against taking an occasional drink as a bracer while the play is going on."

"Mr. Folansbee approved of the rule prohibiting such drinking."

"Did he?"

"Certainly he did."

"Then he has changed his mind, for I saw him taking a drink with Lockwell about three minutes ago. What Lockwell and the manager can do together, I can do. I think the rule a nuisance, and I advise you to have it cut out without delay."

Then Lawrence strolled out, still smoking.

Frank realized there was trouble brewing.

"There is something behind this that I do not understand," he muttered, hastening with his dressing.

CHAPTER II.

ENVOIOUS ACTORS.

Leslie Lawrence had been the leading man of the old "Empire Theatre Comedy Company." He was a rather handsome fellow in his way, and he was struck on himself and the centre of the stage. He delighted to monopolize the centre of the stage.

Frank's first opportunity as an actor had come while Lawrence was ill and unable to fill his role. Roscoe Havener was forced to fill the vacant part in a hurry, and no person but Merriwell was available, so Frank was taken.

It was with many misgivings that Havener ran Merriwell in to fill such a prominent part, even for one night; but he was literally astounded by the really creditable manner in which Frank played the part, although given but a few hours' notice.

Then Frank was kept on Lawrence's parts till the actor was able to go on again. And Lawrence was told by every one that the young amateur had played his parts almost, if not quite, as well as he could play them himself.

Lawrence's pride was touched, but he kept it to himself for the time. Later, however, when Frank assumed the management of the company, the leading man deserted the organization, refusing to act under Merriwell.

But Lawrence had left at a bad time of the season, and, being without money, he was stranded in St. Louis. He could not get back to New York, and in vain he sought an engagement, till Frank appeared on the outlook for people to fill the cast of his new play.

Lawrence swallowed his pride and begged for an engagement. He was just the sort of man Merry was looking after, and so he was taken into the new company.

When He Said He Would Get Clif Drunk, Jazeb Little Knew His Man. See No. 30 of True Blue.

Now Lawrence had learned that Merriwell was not the real manager of the company, but had accepted a salary, like the others, and was to be paid a royalty on the proceeds derived from the performance.

And straightway Lawrence lost no time in showing his independence. This was the beginning, he told himself. There was more to follow.

It made him "sore" to see Merriwell filling the part of "John Smith," which was exactly suited to Lawrence's fancy. It made him "sore" to be forced to play "second fiddle" to this young upstart, who really had no right to act so well with so little knowledge of the stage and absolutely without training.

Lawrence pictured himself playing "John Smith," and the picture was so pleasing to his fancy that he felt that the time must come when he would be given an opportunity to step in and show what he could do as the simple, brave and noble young Westerner.

At the end of the second act a property tree trunk that spanned a chasm had broken beneath Frank's feet just as he was carrying Elsie across a chasm, and the two had fallen out of sight in the canvas depths of the chasm. This accident had given Lawrence a momentary start of satisfaction, for he had hoped that Merriwell would be injured—would have a sprained ankle, broken leg or something of the sort.

But Frank had come out of the accident without injury, and had held Elsie so she was not hurt, not a little to Leslie's disgust.

Lawrence had wondered over the breaking of the tree trunk, and, at the first opportunity, he had examined the broken pieces. What he discovered caused him to whistle softly to himself.

A little later, while the play was going on,

Lawrence met Lockwell alone behind the scenes.

"I say," he drawled languidly. "Lucky Merriwell wasn't hurt, eh?"

"Lucky!" exploded Lockwell. Then he suddenly changed his manner, saying, "Oh, yes, of course, very lucky!"

"Wonder what made the old thing break," murmured Lawrence, carelessly.

"How do you suppose I know?" asked Lockwell, swiftly.

"Don't you know?" asked the inquisitive actor, pointedly.

"Of course not. Suppose it was not strong enough to bear the strain. What are you driving at?"

"It was strong enough at rehearsals."

"What are you driving at?"

Lockwell was nervous, and Lawrence saw it.

"Oh, nothing," he softly said. "Only, if I were in your place, I'd take care that Merriwell does not get to examine that break."

Lockwell started back, and then he stepped forward and his hand shot out, falling on Lawrence's shoulder.

"See here," he hoarsely exclaimed, "what are you insinuating?"

"Not a thing, my dear fellow," was the answer. "It is plain to me that there are others besides myself who are not stuck on Frank Merriwell."

"Stuck on him! Why, I de——"

Lockwell stopped short.

"Go on," urged Lawrence, quietly.

"Oh, I don't know anything about you!" exclaimed Lockwell. "I won't talk to you."

"Then I will talk to you," said Lawrence, with sudden decisiveness. "I know all about it, and you cannot be any more sorry than I am that Frank Merriwell did not break his leg in falling. That chap may be all right, but he's getting too high in the air to suit

me. What he needs is to be taken down a bit. He has stolen the idea used at the end of the third act in this play. That saw mill scene is not original with him. All the same, out here in this part of the country where we are playing, it's not likely anybody ever saw the other play, and he will make money and win fame. He has not been on the stage three months, all told, and yet he has written a play and is doing the star part in it, while the rest of us, who have had experience and know our business, are forced to play second fiddle to him. It makes me sore. I don't want to see this show go up, for the engagement is bound to be profitable, and I need the scads it will bring in; but I would like to see Merriwell laid on the shelf, and I have hopes that something will happen to put him there."

And this was the fellow to whom Frank had advanced money in St. Louis! This was the fellow Frank had given an engagement after Lawrence had once refused to act in a company managed by him.

Such is the gratitude of some men!

Lockwell grasped the hand of the malicious actor.

"I am with you!" he almost hissed. "I thought you stuck on him, like all the other fools. You have appeared to be."

"Policy, diplomacy, shrewdness, my dear fellow. I am looking after the dust. Merriwell is the manager of this——"

"No, he is not the manager. Folansbee is the man. Merriwell is on salary, like the rest of us."

"But he engaged the people."

"Because he knew whom to engage, and Folansbee did not."

"And he has done the most of the work."

"That makes no difference. Folansbee is furnishing the cash, and the contracts were all made with him. He has let Merriwell go

ahead so far, but now, if this thing proves a winner, which it will, he'll take the reins in his own hands."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, I'm in with Folansbee. I knew him before Merriwell ever saw him. Don't say a word about it, but I've got him on the string, and I know what he'll do."

"You are sure?"

"Dead sure. A week from now Merriwell will find he does not cut so much ice."

"But he'll still be the star of the piece."

"I suppose so."

"And we'll have the pleasure of seeing him called before the curtain every evening."

"It looks that way, unless——"

"Unless what?"

"Unless another tree should break."

"Oh, I haven't much confidence in anything knocking him out that way."

"Why not?"

"He is the luckiest ever. He always lands right side up."

"Oh, I don't know."

"I do. I've seen more of him than you have. I was with the company when he started out in the business, and I tell you now that nothing seems to throw him down for keeps. Every time luck seems to go against him it turns out in the end to be the most fortunate thing for him that could have happened. You saw a sample of it to-night."

"How?"

"The breaking of that tree trunk."

"Well?"

"Instead of doing him any harm, the audience seemed to accept it as a first class climax for that act, and applauded more than they had at all up to that point."

"I know that," grated Lockwell. "It made me hot."

"You'll see lots of things that will make

HOW DID THE VILLIANOUS BARTENDER SECURE BESSIE'S PIN? SEE NO. 30 OF TRUE BLUE.

you hot as long as you are with that fellow."

"Well, what are we going to do about it?"

"Can't say just now, but we'll wait. We can let him know that he isn't so much. That will give me some satisfaction, at least. I must go on now. Work Folansbee."

"Trust me for that. I'm glad to know there is somebody besides myself who is not eager to slobber over Merriwell. I'll have a talk with you later about this."

"All right; but look out that he doesn't examine that broken tree trunk."

"I will. Thanks for the hint."

Frank's enemies were getting together, and his success and popularity were making them all the more bitter.

CHAPTER III.

ELSIE'S DOUBTS.

The curtain had fallen on the final act, and the audience was moving out, while the orchestra played "The Star Spangled Banner."

"It was immense."

"A perfectly lovely play."

"The best ever given in this place."

"And Frank Merriwell—isn't he splendid?"

"So young and handsome!"

"And he wrote the play!"

"He must be awfully smart!"

"That young man will make a name for himself."

"Yes, he will become famous."

These and similar comments were heard on all sides. Not one person expressed displeasure or disapproval for anything connected with the play.

And behind the scenes were a delighted and satisfied lot of people, with the exception of Frank's two jealous enemies, who did their best to dissemble and appear elated.

Ephraim Gallup, who had been in the front of the house, came rushing in behind

the curtain and flung his long arms around Merriwell, acting almost hysterical.

"Gol darn my punkins!" he cried. "I ain't never seen northin' that beat it sence I left the old farm daown in Varmount! All the folks is tickled to death. And yeou was jest a rip smasher, Frank, danged if yeou wan't! I'm so gol darn prauod of ye that it seems I'm reddy to swell up and bu'st. Whe-ee-ee! Whoo-oo-oo! Hoo-ray!"

"Steady, Ephraim!" laughed Frank. "You'll tear this dress suit to pieces, and I need it in the last act."

"Need it! So yeou do! And you look jest stunnin' in it, too! All the girls jest caught their breaths and kept their eyes glued on yeou ev'ry minute. You was a hero to the girls in the audience, Frank. I bet some of 'em wanted to steal ye. By gum, yeou'll have to look out for him, Elsie, or they'll carry him right off."

Elsie, who was near, might have blushed visibly, but the stage paint on her cheeks concealed any such sign of embarrassment.

"I jest wisht some of the other fellers was here to-night," Ephraim went on. "If they had bin, wouldn't they whooped her up! By gosh! Frank, yeou must take this play back East and play it in New Haven. Jeewhillikins, them fellers there won't do a thing! They'll jest tear the theatre daown!"

Frank laughed.

"You are letting your enthusiasm run away with you, Ephraim," he said. "You forget Elsie. She had——"

"I know what she has had and what she done. Little gal, I didn't believe it was in ye! Yeou alwus was a peach, but I didn't think yeou was such a darn sweet little actress. Why, I laughed when yeou laughed, and I cried when yeou cried. I'm afeared two or three fellers sneaked by me aout there at the door when I was wipin' the tears aout

Clif Found Out What Was Meant by "the Blind Pig." See No. 30 of True Blue.

of my eyes with my handkerchief. Nobody could have done it better, and darned if I believe anybody could have done it so well. Yeou was jest yeourself, an' that's what made it so slappin' good."

"Thank you, Ephraim," laughed Elsie, her heart overflowing. "Somehow I didn't seem to have to act. Everything came just as if it was true, and——"

She stopped short, looking at Frank. She remembered then that it was true. He had written the play around the story of her noble attempt to sacrifice herself for the sake of a friend, and she had been playing scenes out of her own life.

Elsie hastily turned away, and Frank followed her, leaving the enthusiastic Vermonter to talk with others of the company.

In a dark place amid a mass of scenery Frank stopped her. She put her hands over her face and seemed on the point of breaking down and weeping.

"Elsie, Elsie!" exclaimed erry, in surprise and consternation; "what is the matter?"

"Nothing."

"Oh, yes there is! Why do you act so strangely?"

Silence.

His arms were about her.

"Tell me, sweetheart—tell me!" he urged.

"Why, I thought you were so happy!"

"I am happy."

Then she began to sob.

"Happy! This is a strange way to show it! You act as if you are decidedly unhappy, and after such a night."

"I am happy, and that's the trouble. I—was thinking of—of her."

"Her?"

"Yes."

"Who is 'her'?"

"Inza," murmured Elsie, with bowed head.

"Oh!"

Frank started. A pang shot through his own breast.

"Why, dear little girl, why should thinking of her make you so unhappy?"

"Because I—I am here—with you, and she should be the one to—to——"

"Nonsense, Elsie! We talked that all over, you know."

"But playing the part to-night has made me feel that I was right—that I did my duty when I tried to give you up. Somehow I feel that Inza is the one who should share your success and your happiness. I feel that I am usurping her place."

"Please don't, Elsie!" he entreated. "I knew you were unhappy all at once. And this is the night of all nights when you should be happy. We cannot alter our fate, even if we would. You must believe that."

"Ah, but I know you are talking to set my mind at ease. You are not a fatalist, Frank."

"Well, it is strange if I am not," for enough has happened in my life to make me one. Inza could not have played your part to-night, if she had tried. You must stop thinking about such things. We are together, and——"

"Somehow it does not seem right for me to play the part. I have not thought of it like this before, Frank, but it seems bold and wrong. If I had known just how I should feel I do not believe I would have consented. If the part was different—if it was not so much like a bit out of my own life——"

"Elsie, stop! You are letting your head get filled with foolish ideas."

"How can I help it?"

"You must! Come, sweetheart, look up. Think of the applause, think of the cheers, think how the audience fairly shouted, think

how they called us out to bow hand in hand again and again."

"It was a great triumph for you."

"And for you. You aided me, for, with any one else in the part, I could not have acted so well. I know it. You were an inspiration for me. I needed you, Elsie— have needed you a long, long time."

He drew her closer and kissed her.

At that moment, Leslie Lawrence and Percy Lockwell passed unseen. Both saw the lovers.

"It's a shame," said Lockwell, fiercely, "for the fellow to catch such a girl! She is a little peach, and I wouldn't mind having her on the string myself. I don't suppose she'd look at anybody but Merriwell."

"Oh, she's a little light-headed thing," said Lawrence. "She's poor, too. If some chap had the stuff, I reckon he'd win her away from Merriwell in a walk; but neither of us has the stuff, so we stand no show."

"Perhaps not," muttered Lockwell, "but there's nothing like trying, you know."

CHAPTER IV.

THE SUPPER.

Parker Folansbee had settled with the manager, and he came back behind the scenes in a jolly mood.

"If this thing keeps us, it'll be a snap," he declared. "We won't do a thing but have a red hot supper at the hotel to-night. I've ordered it. Ordered it at the end of the second act, when I saw the play was going to be a go. Everybody come. The whole company's invited. We'll have a blow out."

Frank heard and was troubled, for he saw that Folansbee had been drinking freely, and he had heard that the manager was a "warm baby" when he got started on a spree.

"It's the worst thing that could happen," thought Merry. "He will ruin discipline in

the company, for others will follow his example when they find he is drinking."

Then Frank remembered his unpleasant interview with Lawrence, and, without delay, he followed Folansbee, saying:

"If you can spare the time, I wish to speak with you, Mr. Folansbee."

"Ha! You are all right, Merriwell, my boy!" cried the "angel," familiarly catching hold of Frank and giving him a slap on the back.

This was quite unlike Folansbee's usual languid, courteous manner, and Frank was still more unpleasantly impressed. He drew the man aside, where the others would not be likely to hear their conversation. Without hesitation, Frank came right at the point.

"Mr. Folansbee, something has happened to-night that I regret very much. Mr. Lawrence has seen fit to break rules in my presence."

"He has?" said the backer of the company, straightening up. "Well, how did he dare? He shall be called to an account. If he does it again, he shall be released!"

"But he claimed an excuse for doing so."

"How? What was it?"

"He said you permitted it."

"What? No, sir! Rules are rules. What did he do?"

"Took a drink in my dressing room during the course of the play."

Folansbee looked disturbed. He coughed, started to say something, stopped, started again.

"Well, you see—I—I don't know as that is so bad, but——"

"He broke a rule."

This caused the backer to stiffen again.

"Of course he did—of course he broke a rule. You made that rule, and——"

"He was decidedly insulting about it, for

HEAD END FIRST IS NOT THE WAY TO FIGHT CLIF. SEE NO. 30 OF TRUE BLUE.

he took pains to drink in my presence, as if to let me know that I have no influence in the affairs of this company. He told me as much."

"Why, the fellow shall be called down—yes, sir, I say he shall! Where is he?"

"Wait a minute. He said he saw you take a drink with Lockwell."

"He did?"

"Yes."

"Well——"

Folansbee stopped, at loss for words. His position was embarrassing. He scowled and stammered. And then, all at once, he snapped:

"What right had Mr. Lawrence to play the spy! What right had he to be rubber-necking? If Mr. Lockwell was not feeling well and I saw fit to give him a drink of my whisky——"

"Did Lockwell say he wasn't feeling well?"

"No—no—but——"

"I did not observe that he appeared ill."

"I did," declared Folansbee, desperately. "I saw he needed a drink. Besides that, no rule like that should be enforced too rigidly. There are times when——"

"If there are such times, then we had better abolish the rule. Rules are made to be obeyed, Mr. Folansbee, and when it is found that one rule can be broken with impunity, others will be broken. That will ruin discipline."

"Too much discipline is worse than none. You can't keep actors from taking an occasional drink."

"I am not trying, but I do not believe in having any men in the company who cannot get along without drinking during performances, for examples are contagious, and where one drinks others will. I am working for the general good of all, as you must be aware, Mr. Folansbee."

"Yes, yes, I think you're right; but still I say you can't be too strict, Merriwell—you can't be too strict."

Folansbee plainly showed his irritation, and Merry saw it would do no good to make further talk to the man then.

"All right," said Frank, slowly. "We'll talk it over some other time."

"Yes, some other time. We're going to have a supper at the hotel, you know. You'll have to make a speech, Merriwell. The supper is to be in your honor."

Now no fellow ever enjoyed a jolly supper more than Frank Merriwell, but something told him this supper would be a mistake. Still it was to be in his honor, and he could not afford to seem otherwise than pleased.

He went to his dressing room and prepared to shed his dress suit. Folansbee followed and advised him to keep it on.

"We'll have this supper as swell as possible," he said. "Almost every man in the company has a dress suit, for nearly all wear them in the last act of the play, so I have asked them to keep on their costumes as they appear in the final act, removing the make-up from their faces, that's all. We'll have a rollicking supper, and it will be the talk of this town."

So Frank rubbed cocoa butter over his face and washed up, keeping on his dress suit.

Half an hour later the members of the company and the manager of the theatre sat down to the supper provided for them at the hotel.

As Frank had expected, wine flowed freely. Folansbee was at the head of the table, with Frank in the place of honor.

The supper began in a merry fashion, with a chatter of talk, jokes, and stories.

Basil Holt, who played "heavies," but could do a comedy turn on a pinch, had be-

gun to lose his hair, so there was a bald spot on the top of his head. Some one suggested that it would be fine to have a dance after supper, but the floor of the dining room did not seem just suited to the purpose.

"Never mind that," said Holt. "You can use the top of my head. I'm sure that's smooth enough."

"By the way, Holt," murmured Leslie Lawrence, "I see a member of the French academy says the growth of hair can be stimulated by music."

"I hardly think that is a new discovery," broke in Merriwell, soberly. "I have heard many a hair-raising song."

This provoked a shout of laughter all round the table.

"That's all right, Merriwell!" declared Folansbee, with unusual hilarity. "They don't get ahead of you. But why is it that women are so seldom bald headed?"

"Oh, women are better than men," declared Lillian Bird, "and so such affliction is not visited upon them."

"I hardly see the connection," laughed Folansbee; "and I don't know about women being better than me. The Bible doesn't say anything about seven devils being cast out of a man."

"No, of course not!" returned the actress, quick as a flash; "he has every one of them now."

"Oh, say!" gasped the "angel," when the merriment over this quick answer had subsided. "That drives me to drink." He emptied his glass in a hurry, and many of the others imitated his example.

"This is the first time I've surrounded genuine fiz for six months," confessed Douglas Dunton. "I opened a bottle—a small bottle—when I got my engagement with Haley's old 'All-Star Combination,' and I haven't

had the price since. I couldn't get anything on trust, either."

"Speaking about trusts," said Frank, gently, "I see the Virginia producers are trying to form a peanut trust." And then, after a moment of silence, he added, "I believe the public will protest vigorously against such a 'shell game.'"

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted Folansbee. "What, again? Oh, come, Merriwell, do take a little drink of champagne! You would be too funny for anything if you had a pint in you."

"Thank you, sir," declined Frank. "You couldn't induce me to do it. Please don't urge me."

"Oh, don't be odd to-night, Mr. Merriwell," broke in Lockwell, who was at Frank's elbow, and whose face showed that he was already well under the influence of stimulants. "Let me fill your glass."

He attempted to do so, but Frank checked him.

"Mr. Lockwell, I do not wish to appear cranky, but I have never taken a drink of liquor, and——"

"It is time you did, old man," insinuated Lockwell, with insolent persistence. "We're just a jolly party here together, and you must not be the odd one."

Elsie Bellwood's eyes were on Frank, but she had no reason to fear that he would touch the wine. He firmly declined, showing no offense at Lockwell's insulting ragings and laughter.

"Well," said Percy, "I never drink wine—when it's out of my reach. If I have the price—well, I blow it. You know they say banknotes are bad things, as they are liable to convey disease, and——"

"That explains why I haven't been ill since I was a kid," chipped in Harold Dangerford, who had been keeping still up to that time.

"Fill up your glasses," cried Folansbee,

his speech beginning to betray that he had drank too much. "I'll give you a toast."

There was a clinking of glasses. Merry's glass was filled to the brim with water. When Frank was not looking at it, Lockwell's hand hovered over the glass a moment.

"Here is to Frank Merriwell, author of 'John Smith of Montana,'" cried Folansbee. "You all know Frank Merriwell, and you know he is all right. As an actor he is a wonder, and as a play writer he soon will be classed with Bronson Howard, William Gillette, David Belasco, and the leading American playwrights. Up, everybody—up and drink to Frank Merriwell!"

"Hurrah for Frank Merriwell!" was the cry, and the company, rapidly growing boisterous, rose and flourished their glasses aloft.

Elsie, like Frank, was drinking nothing but water.

Merry bowed. He did not flush; his face was strangely pale.

"I thank you, Mr. Folansbee," he said; "and I thank you, my friends, for I hope and believe you are all my friends. I am sure it is making it too strong to call me a wonder as an actor, and I am sure it will take years of hard, patient toil for me to rank with Howard, Gillette and Belasco as a writer of plays. Of one thing you may be sure: If I climb the ladder of fame and fortune, I shall not forget my true friends of these days."

Then there was another cheer, the merry clinking of glasses, and the wine vanished.

They sat down, and there was a babel of voices round the table.

Frank had swallowed nearly half of the water in his glass. He wiped his mouth with his napkin and looked at the remainder of the contents suspiciously.

"Queer taste to it," he thought.

Then he called the waiter, had the glass removed and another brought.

Lockwell, at his elbow, grinned behind his napkin—a sneering, triumphant grin.

The supper progressed, and the party grew noisier. Everybody seemed trying to talk at once.

Elsie Bellwood looked distressed, and Frank was beginning to try to think of some scheme for getting her away from the table. He did not know how far things might be carried, and already he could see Elsie was shocked.

But there was a queer feeling in Frank's head; his brain seemed heavy and befogged and he could not think clearly. He wondered what ailed him. Once he started to get up, but all his body was pervaded by a languidness, and he thought he would wait a bit till the feeling passed from him.

"The strain of to-night has been too much for me," he told himself. Still in a confused way, he reasoned that it could not be, for he was healthy and strong, and he had endured more trying things in the old days at Yale, when he was one of the crew or had taken part in some running race.

He heard the talk and laughter all round him, but the words of the speakers seemed to run together and the lights were swaying and dancing. With a mighty effort he braced up and took a drink of water.

"Aren't you feeling well, Merriwell?" murmured Lockwell's voice in his ear.

"Yes—no—ah, I'm feeling a little—a little—queer," answered Frank, hazily. "I'll be all right in a minute."

"A little wine might do you good," purred Lockwell.

"No, no——"

"Just a swallow," urged the tempter.

"No——"

"As medicine."

Frank braced himself.

"Not a drop!" he spoke, sternly.

"Well, curse his obstinacy!" thought the actor. "I never saw such a fellow! But wait a little."

Some one proposed a toast. All sprang up.

All but Merriwell.

He looked up at them in a dazed way, as if not quite understanding what they were doing.

"Ha! A toast—a toast to Parker Folansbee, our manager. May he live long and make barrels of money with 'John Smith.'"

"Ye—ee—ee!" was the general shout.

"What's the matter with Merriwell?" asked Lawrence, pointedly. "Does he decline to drink a toast to our manager?"

"Come, old fellow," whispered Lockwell, loud enough for all to hear. "Don't let them catch on. Of course, they will know that mere water would not knock you out this way."

And the words, spoken laughingly, as if in jest, were heard by nearly every one.

Frank struggled unsteadily to his feet, holding onto the edge of the table. He picked up his glass and dropped it. It was broken on the table. He was quickly supplied with another glass.

"Ha! ha!" he laughed, thickly. "'Sall right. Just a little tired, y'know! Here's to Park' Folansbee."

He was conscious that everything was wrong, but he could not conceive why it should be so. He looked all about in search of Elsie, finally locating her far, far away, as it seemed, at the further end of the table. There was a strange look on her face—a look of fear. He wanted to tell her that it was all right, but his tongue seemed to lie like a lump in his mouth.

Hattie Harrison, who played the old wo-

man's part, was openly smoking a cigarette. Frank felt like rebuking her, for she was near Elsie, and he could hear Elsie coughing from the smoke.

Lillian Bird was laughing. She had taken more wine than was good for her. She began to sing. Folansbee applauded with all his might, crying:

"That's shtuff! Let 'er go! Hooray! Ev'rybody set down an' let 'er shing!"

She sang the song about half through, and then fell to laughing so that she could not finish it.

"Disgraceful!" thought Frank, hazily. "I'll get Elsie away at once."

But he did not stir. Somehow he seemed paralyzed.

"Ye—ee—ee!" shouted somebody.

Whizz—a glass flew through the air. Crash! It shattered a mirror.

"'Rah!" shouted Folansbee. "I'll pay damages! Ev'rybody have good time! 'Rah fer us!"

Other glasses followed.

A waiter protested.

"Gentlemen and ladies," he began.

"Mistake," muttered Frank dopily. "He dunno who's talking to."

"Gentlemen and ladies," said the waiter, "I beg you will not break things. The proprietor——"

"Shoot the proprietor!" cried Folansbee. "I'll pay damages! I've got a good thing; an' I'll make a barrel of dough with Frank Merriwell and 'John Smith.' Get out, you menial craven! Let him have it, ev'rybody!"

He flung a glass at the waiter. Others followed suit, and the waiter ran, being pelted till he disappeared from the room.

Some one challenged Lillian Bird to do a skirt dance on the table. She accepted the challenge and started to get up.

"Hold!"

What a Dangerous Position Suspended From a Flag Pole. See True Blue No. 30.

Everybody was startled. The word came from Frank Merriwell's lips. Pale and shaking, Merry started to rise. He would take Elsie from the table and the room.

All eyes were on him as he dragged himself up to a standing position at the side of Percy Lockwell.

"Hold!"

He stretched out his hand. Then he collapsed and fell forward on the table, face downward!

CHAPTER V.

"YOU WERE DRUNK!"

"What's the matter with him?"

"Too much water!"

"He can't be drunk!"

"He's been drinking nothing but water."

"Since when?" murmured Percy Lockwell, picking up Frank's half-emptied glass. "It strikes me this is champagne."

And so it was!

"Why, the hypocrite!" cried Leslie Lawrence, laughing. "And he was pretending to drink water all the while. Oh, ha! ha! ha!"

"Well, I'll be hanged if he didn't fool me!" grugled Parker Folansbee. "Oh, ha! ha! ha!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted nearly everybody round the table.

"Here's to Frank Merriwell, the total abstainer and the first man jagged!"

Up rose a girl with flaming cheeks and flashing eyes.

"It is false!" cried Bessie Bellwood. "Frank Merriwell has not been drinking wine, and anybody who says he has is maliciously trying to hurt him!"

There was a moment of silence, and then Lilian Bird said:

"Don't get excited about it, my dear.

Why Did the Prisoner Want So Many Eggs? See No. 30 of True Blue.

What's the use? He had a right to take a little wine."

"But he hasn't touched wine!" declared Frank's little champion. "I know it! He is ill! Call a doctor!"

"He's not so ill but he'll recover all right in the morning," said Lockwell, meaningly; "though he may have a big head to-morrow."

But Elsie would not believe Frank had been drinking. She ran round to his side and put her arms about him, calling:

"Frank, Frank, what is the matter? Frank, wake up! Oh, dear! oh, dear!"

She wrung her hands helplessly.

"Don't 'stress yourself, Mish Bellwood," said Folansbee, with an attempt at soberness and dignity. "'Sall right. Little wine never done anybody hurt, y'know."

"It's not wine; it's something else. Oh, you are all mean to say such a thing! I'll go for help myself!"

She ran out of the dining room, followed by a shout of laughter.

In a short time she returned, followed by two waiters, who seemed to fear that things would be thrown at them. They lifted Frank and carried him from the room, while the carousing company sang, "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow."

Frank was taken up to his room and placed on the bed. Elsie insisted that a doctor should be called. In the course of thirty minutes a bell boy returned and informed her that every doctor in town was attending to patients.

Of course this was not true. Lockwell, pretending to be a great friend of Merriwell, had intercepted the boy and told him not to call a doctor.

"There is no need of letting this matter get out," he said. "Of course there is noth-

ing the matter with Mr. Meriwell but a little too much—ah—. You understand.”

The boy had grinned and winked, saying: “Oh, yes, I understand.”

Lockwell gave the boy a quarter.

“Go back in half an hour and tell the girl you can’t get a doctor,” he instructed.

So it came about that no doctor was called for Frank.

Elsie watched beside Merry till late, leaving the door of the room open. She saw two of the men carrying Parker Folansbee to his room, and she knew the supper was over. She shuddered as she thought of that supper. Then she waited for Lilian Bird or Hattie Harrison to come to her, but neither came.

At last Frank stirred, opened his eyes for a moment, looked at Elsie, closed them and turned on his side. He seemed to be sleeping quietly at last.

Elsie crept away to her room, where she wept and worried till it began to grow light in the morning. Then she fell asleep.

Fortunately the company did not have to leave the place till eleven o’clock the next forenoon. Had it been necessary for an earlier start, it is pretty certain that some of them would not have been able to take the train.

The morning papers came in from St. Louis at ten o’clock, and were eagerly waited for by Percy Lockwell and Leslie Lawrence, both of whom had turned out in time to sit down at the last table of the regular breakfast.

Frank Merriwell came down stairs and into the office just as Lockwell and Lawrence were looking the papers over. He looked pale and unlike his usual buoyant self.

“Do we get notices?” he asked, approaching the actors.

Both started

“Eh? Oh, yes!” exclaimed Lawrence. “Here is a very good notice in this paper.”

It was a really good notice of the show, telling the plot of the play and saying that the parts had been well filled. Merriwell and Elsie were given especially good notices. Frank was spoken of as the author of the play.

“This is fame, old fellow,” said Lawrence, patronizingly.

“So is this,” snickered Lockwell, handing over another paper. “This is very interesting reading.”

Frank looked it over. He gave a start as he read down the column. The play was well spoken of, but the reporter had not failed to give an account of the supper that took place afterward at the hotel. It was said that at this supper the young author of the play had celebrated his triumph by attempting to make a “tank” of himself. He had drank more wine than anybody else, with the result that he was the first person to go “under the table,” and he had been “tenderly laid away to sleep off his jag.”

Frank’s face had been pale, but it was flaming red when he had finished reading.

“I would give fifty dollars to know who wrote this lie!” he exclaimed, his eyes flashing.

“Oh, now don’t be too hard, old fellow,” said Lawrence. “You couldn’t blame the reporter, don’t you know. We all had a pretty swift time of it last night. Folansbee will have a nice little bill to settle before the landlord will let us go on.”

“What do you mean?” asked Frank, grimly. “Do you insinuate that I drank anything last night?”

“Oh, I don’t insinuate!”

“Of course not,” purred Lockwell. “My de-ah fellow!”

Frank put his hand to his head.

Clif Had to “Monkey With the Buzz Saw” to Save His Life. See No. 30 of True Blue.

"I was ill in the night," he said. "I woke up feeling deathly sick. I wonder what ailed me."

Lawrence and Lockwell turned away, pretending to try to hide their smiles. Frank saw and understood. He quivered with indignation.

"Look here," he said; "I want to understand this! I do not drink—never drank in my life. But my memory of last night is hazy. I remember something about the supper, and then—and then I forget everything. What happened? Tell me what happened."

"My de-ah fellow!"

Frank felt like striking Lockwell.

"Don't call me that!" he exploded. "Answer my question! Tell me what happened!"

"You know you never drink."

"Do you mean to say that I—— No, you wouldn't dare say it! It would be a lie! And still I do not remember what happened. Lawrence, I appeal to you!"

"Don't!" begged Lawrence, showing a pretending eagerness to get away.

"Hold on!" commanded Merry. "You must tell me! What was it? What did I do?"

"The paper lies—you know it lies!"

Lawrence snapped his fingers, took out a gold decorated cigarette case, selected a cigarette, and prepared to light it.

Frank caught him by the shoulder.

"Speak out, man!" he commanded. "I want to hear it!"

Lawrence turned sharply.

"See here, Mr. Merriwell," he said, bluntly, "I know what it means to tell you the truth. You will be furious—you will say I lied. I do not fancy being called a liar, even by you. I might be tempted to

resent it. So I will say nothing more about it."

Frank was cool enough now.

"Mr. Lawrence," he said, quietly, "you can tell me the truth without the least danger of anything like that happening. No matter what you call me, I shall not call you a liar—now. I know you would not dare deliberately tell me anything I can prove a falsehood. What ailed me last night?"

"You were drunk!"

Frank staggered back a step, staring at the actor. For some seconds he was silent. Then he bowed his head.

"If I was drunk," he muttered, "I must have been deranged when I drank the stuff."

He turned away, and Lawrence and Lockwell grinned and winked at each other.

CHAPTER VI.

FOLANSBEE ASSERTS HIS AUTHORITY.

The company went on its way, and success seemed to await it everywhere. Delvin Riddle, the advance man, did some clever work ahead of the show, arousing the curiosity of the people in the towns along the route, and making them curious to witness the play, and see Frank Merriwell.

How Riddle got hold of the stories about Merriwell was a mystery, but he learned a number of the most interesting things that had happened to the young star, and he used them in the papers in such a manner that people fell right away to talking about Merriwell.

Riddle told of Frank's career at Yale, and all the youngsters in the various places were eager to get a look at him. They had heard of him before, but they were doubtful if this could be the genuine Frank Merriwell. They were inclined to think him a chap who had stolen the name and fame of the original.

But when they saw him in "John Smith
WAS IT A LIVING BODY THAT WAS THROWN INTO THE OLD WELL? SEE TRUE BLUE NO. 30.

of Montana" their doubts were dispelled and they whooped themselves hoarse with delight. They followed him about when he appeared on the streets, and they did everything they could for him in the way of advertising.

Frank's fame spread swiftly. Stories of the new star that had arisen flooded the papers.

But there was one memory that rankled like a barb in Merry's heart. It was of the St. Louis paper's report of the supper on the opening night of "John Smith."

Frank knew he had not been drunk, but even the story Elsie had told him of his actions at the table had seemed to confirm the report. He told himself that he must have been seized by a fainting spell, or something of the sort, but he knew that such an explanation would not satisfy anybody else.

It did not satisfy him, but there seemed no other way to account for what had happened.

Although things seemed to be going along swimmingly, and Frank was winning fame and money, Merry felt that everything was not right in the company.

There was not much discipline, save at rehearsals, when Havener would have things his way, and every member of the company had to obey him.

Frank kept at the plot, putting in new speeches and business and cutting out things that did not "go," for he was determined to make the piece as good as possible. He was not satisfied, as some fellows would have been, to let it go when it seemed pretty near all right; he was determined to make it perfectly right, and so he kept tinkering away.

Of course, this made work for the people in the cast, and some of them grumbled and fussed over it. Both Lawrence and Lockwell "raised a kick," complaining that it was

a nuisance to learn so much stuff that was changed and abandoned.

"Merriwell will monkey with the play till he ruins it," declared Lawrence.

"And Havener will keep us rehearsing till we are worn out," grumbled Lockwell.

One day Lockwell declined to come to rehearsal, although he was sitting in the office of the hotel when the others started for the theatre.

Havener sent Ephraim Gallup after him. Ephraim was the hardest worker in the company, as he was forced to do all kinds of odd jobs, and usually stayed up after the show was over to see that all the special machinery and mechanical arrangements were packed and made ready for shipment. As Ephraim was attending to this on the night of the supper, he had not been present at the table, but of course he did not believe Frank was intoxicated.

Gallup found Lockwell smoking a cigar in the office of the hotel.

"Havener wants ye right away to the opery haouse," announced the Vermonter.

"You tell Havener to go chase himself," yawned Lockwell. "I'm tired, and I'm not feeling very well."

"Well, he don't stan' no foolin', so yeou'd better come erlong."

"Get out. You're too fresh! Somebody can read my part. I sha'n't rehearse to-day."

"All right. I'll tell him, but look aout fer squalls."

Ephraim went back and reported Lockwell's words just as Lockwell had spoken them. Havener's face turned black as a cloud. Without a word he started after Lockwell.

Lockwell was not found. He had disappeared, and it was necessary for the rehearsal to go on without him, if there was a rehearsal.

Why That Blast Upon the Fog Horn? Was Fish-Cake in Trouble? See No. 30 of True Blue.

"Mr. Folansbee," said Havener, when he returned and found Folansbee and Lawrence smoking and talking in a dressing room, "am I the stage manager of this company?"

"Why, of course you are," was the reply.

"Then I wish Lockwell fined ten dollars for refusing to rehearse this afternoon."

"Did he refuse?" asked Folansbee, in surprise.

"Yes. Does the fine stand?"

"Why—why——"

"Does the fine stand?"

"Of course."

"That's all I want to know. You will pay him ten dollars short at the end of the week?"

"Yes, if you say——"

"I do."

Havener turned and walked out of the dressing room.

"Now, that's a shame!" declared Lawrence, with pretended indignation. "Havener drives us like horses. Lockwell is clean beat out. You know we were up pretty late last night, and——"

"Yes, I know."

"Lockwell has a headache to-day. He told me he did not feel as if he could rehearse. And you have promised to fine him just because that slave-master asked you to!"

"Oh, well, that'll be all right, my boy—that'll be all right."

"How?"

"I shall fine him."

"You will?"

"But I'll make it all right with him afterward. He won't lose anything; don't worry."

"Well, I'm glad to know he won't lose anything, but I'm sorry you played into the hands of Havener. You are manager of this company."

"Of course I am," swelled Folansbee.

"And you should assert yourself. You are letting Merriwell and Havener have altogether too much to say. You are not carrying this thing through as you should. I trust you will pardon me for speaking in this plain manner, but I hate to see you imposed upon by those fellows. It was your money that put this company on the road. Without you the show could not have started."

Folansbee got up and walked the floor.

"You are speaking the truth, Mr. Lawrence," he said. "I am the proprietor and manager."

"Show Merriwell and Havener that you are."

"How?"

"By asserting your authority."

In what way?"

"Well, I'll tell you. This piece is not cast to the best advantage. It can be improved upon."

"Do you think so?"

"I know it."

"In what way can it be improved on?"

"Oh, by several changes."

"Name one."

Lawrence hesitated. He longed to say it could be improved on my giving him the star part and putting Merriwell into an inferior part, but he decided that it would not be wise. Folansbee was an "easy thing," but he would be pretty sure to see through the selfishness of Lawrence's motive in seeking a change. Lawrence must pretend that he was not seeking personal advancement, but was working for the general good to the piece."

"I will name one," he said, slowly. "Lockwell is mis-cast. He is not a German comedian, but he is a mighty good heavy man. This fellow Dunton can play comedy, but he is a poor villain."

Our Premiums Are "All Right" Is What Our Readers Say.

"Eh? You mean that Lockwell should be given Dunton's part?"

"Exactly that. It will be a great thing for the play. Lockwell himself would never say a word about it, but he is crazy to play the villain. He has even learned the part, so that he can go on and play it at a moment's notice. Now, as you are the manager, just tell Havener you want the change made."

"But Havener will object."

"Let him. That's just what you want."

"You mean that when he objects——"

"You show him you are manager. You show your authority. You order him to make the change. Then they will begin to realize that you, the man who has made it possible to put this show on the road, the man whose money is behind it, the man they fancy is of no particular consequence—they will realize that he has some ideas of his own and is the real manager of the company."

Folansbee was impressed.

"By Jove! you are right!" he exclaimed. "I will do just that. If Lockwell were here, I'd have the change made this afternoon—at once. I would, by jove!"

"That would be hasty, as Dunton has not learned Lockwell's part. But the time to show your authority is now. You must keep a stiff backbone, or Havener will beat you down. If you let him do that, you are done for. You'll never have any authority afterward."

"He won't do it. You'll see—you'll see that I have a stiff backbone, and everybody shall see that I am manager of this show. Come on."

Folansbee went out on the stage, where Havener was instructing two or three of the people in some new business. Lawrence followed him out leisurely. As soon as he found an opportunity, Folansbee said:

"Mr. Havener, I want to speak to you."

"All right," said the stage manager; "I will listen, sir."

Folansbee braced up.

"As I am manager of this company, Mr. Havener," he began, "I have decided to make a change that I believe will be for the better."

"Might I ask what the change is?"

"I am coming to that—coming to that. I have decided to make an improvement in the cast."

Havener lifted his eyebrows, with a quick movement.

"Yes?" he said, in surprise.

"Yes. I am not satisfied with the manner in which Dunton plays the villain."

"I thought Mr. Dunton doing very well."

"I say I am not satisfied," said Folansbee, stiffly. "I wish him given another part."

"What part?"

"The German low comedy."

"Why, Lockwell plays that."

"And I wish Mr. Lockwell given the part Dunton has been playing," pursued Folansbee, without hesitation. "You will tell Dunton at once that he is to surrender his part to Lockwell and get Lockwell's part."

"Mr. Folansbee," said Havener, bluntly, "such a change would be a mistake."

"Mr. Havener, you will let me judge. I am the manager."

"And I am the stage manager. I am the one to assign parts."

"And I am the one to change them if they do not suit me as you assign them. I have directed this change; you will make it!"

"But——"

"There are no buts about it, Mr. Havener. You will do as I direct."

"I protest against it, Mr. Folansbee," came sharply from the stage manager. "I know you are the manager of this company, but

JAZEB FOUND OUT HE HAD TACKLED THE WRONG GIRL. SEE NO. 30 OF TRUE BLUE

you are meddling with what you should let alone if you attempt to make shifts in the cast. Things have been going along first rate, and you will do incalculable harm by insisting on——"

Folansbee glanced toward Lawrence. The latter was puffing away at a cigarette, but he nodded a bit for the "angel" to hold out. Then Folansbee interrupted Havener:

"That will do. I have given my directions; you will carry them out."

"I don't know——"

"You have no choice. You may do so, or accept notice."

Havener's face grew almost purple, and it was with the greatest difficulty that he restrained himself from telling Folansbee then and there just what he thought of him. He did hold himself in check, but he said:

"If you ruin the casting of the piece, I shall not be to blame; but I shall appeal to Merriwell."

"Merriwell is not concerned in the management of this piece. He is simply under salary like yourself, and anything he may say will make not a particle of difference with me."

Then Folansbee walked away, and Lawrence followed him into the dressing room.

"There," said the "angel," wiping perspiration from his face, "how was that? Didn't I show them I was the manager?"

"You certainly did," nodded Lawrence.

Inwardly he was chuckling to think how little the man really was the manager of anything.

CHAPTER VII.

FRANK AROUSED.

Of course Havener told Frank, and of course Frank protested to Folansbee, but, backed by Lawrence, the "angel" persisted in his order, so that Dunton was finally given

the comedy part and Lockwell was put in the villain part.

Frank knew there had been an influence behind Folansbee to cause him to order the change, for he was certain the man would not have thought of such a thing of his own accord.

It was not difficult for him to guess what the influence really was, for he knew Folansbee, Lawrence and Lockwell were together night after night in the room of the manager at the various hotels where the company stopped.

At first what took place at those gatherings in the "angel's" room was a mystery to Merry. As he was not invited in, he did not "rubber neck," although he felt more or less curiosity to know what was going on.

At last he tumbled; for, one morning, he happened to hear a bit of conversation between Lockwell and Lawrence.

"How did you come out last night, old man?" asked the former.

"I was just a hundred and seventy-three dollars ahead," answered Lawrence. "And you?"

"Oh, I didn't have much luck. Only won twenty-six fifty. How long do you suppose the sucker will stand for it?"

"Don't know. If he stands long we'll have him milked dry. It's the greatest snap I ever struck."

"If it keeps up two weeks longer this old show can go to blazes for all of me. I'll have money to burn, and I won't care about knocking around at one night stands."

That was all Merry heard, but it was enough. He was onto the game, and his very soul was stirred with indignation. He knew the two rascals were beating Folansbee out of his money at cards. That all were drinking heavily each night was plain, but Folansbee showed the wear and tear worse

HOW TO GET A NICE PRESENT FREE—READ PAGE 32.

than anyone. He was shaky every morning, and his eyes were bloodshot. It was necessary for him to "pitch in" several drinks in order to straighten up.

Frank was alarmed, for he realized that Lawrence and Lockwell might wreck the company if they kept on.

Something must be done.

At first he thought of going to Folansbee and warning him, but he quickly realized that such a course would not do. It would offend the man's pride to tell him that he was being used as a "sucker," and he would refuse to believe it.

Some other course must be pursued.

Frank set about trying to decide what to do.

That day something happened that added to his anger. He found Elsie at rehearsal crying alone in her dressing room. The door was open a bit, and he heard her sobbing, so he went in.

"What is the matter?" he asked in astonishment. "My dear girl, what has happened?"

It was a long time before Elsie could answer. She persisted in declaring that nothing had happened, but Frank knew better.

"You are crying about something, dear little girl. What is it?"

"Oh, it is foolish of me. He didn't mean anything."

Frank was startled.

"He? Who? Has anybody been saying anything to you? Has Folansbee——"

"No, no, not him!"

"Who was it?"

"I can't tell. I don't dare tell you, Frank!"

"You must tell me. If anybody has been saying anything to you that they should not have said, they shall settle with me!"

Frank was aroused, and Elsie saw it. That made her nervous and excited. She feared to tell him the truth.

"Who was it?" he demanded, as if he had the right. "Speak out, Elsie."

"Oh, you will make trouble. I shall not tell you."

He made her face him squarely.

"Little girl," he said, soberly, "your father is dead, and I am your guardian and protector while you are with this company. I have said that I would care for you and protect you. I shall see that you are not insulted. It is bad enough for you to be traveling with a company like this. It was a mistake for me to have permitted you to attend that supper on the first night. I knew it then, and I regretted my blunder. I have promised myself that I will be more careful in the future. If any man has dared——"

"Oh, Mr. Lockwell did not mean anything wrong—I am sure he didn't."

"Lockwell!" flamed Frank. "Was it he? Tell me, Elsie, what did he say—what did he do?"

"Oh, he has been trying to show me attentions."

"Has he?"

"He called me a peach."

"Did he?"

"He said I was pretty enough to catch a man with money. That you did not have any money. He wanted to buy me a diamond ring. He showed lots of money."

Never before had Elsie seen such a look on Merriwell's face. It frightened her, and she cried out, catching him by the arm. Frank's nostrils were dilated, and the glare of his eyes was something terrible to behold.

"The miserable cur!"

Those three words came from Merriwell's lips in a suppressed tone, but they were frightful in their intensity.

Frank turned as if to leave the room. Elsie clung to him.

In Search of a Father Was a New Task for Clif. See No. 30 of True Blue.

"Stop!" she cried, in a panic of fear. "Where are you going?"

"To find Lockwell."

"No, no—you must not—you shall not! Frank—Frank, please—please listen to me! I was foolish—foolish to cry about it! He simply admired me—that's all. He said he had made the money easily, and he wanted to spend it on somebody. Frank—Frank, you are wrong in—in thinking that—that—"

"Elsie," said Merriwell, his voice hoarse and harsh, "you do not know men as I know them, especially such men as Percy Lockwell. I shall take care that he does not insult you again."

"But, I won't let you go till you promise—till you promise you will not—"

"I shall warn him, Elsie, that is all. I shall not lift my hand to him—unless he makes it necessary."

Then Frank unclasped her fingers and walked out of the dressing room, leaving a half-fainting girl behind.

CHAPTER VIII.

LOCKWELL IS WARNED.

Frank found Lockwell smoking a twenty-five cent cigar and talking with Lawrence.

"Mr. Lockwell, I want to speak with you."

"All right," drawled Percy, with an insulting yawn. "Speak away."

"I wish to speak with you alone, sir."

"Aw! Really? What for, my de-ah fellow?"

"That you will learn presently. It is a private matter. Kindly follow me."

"Be back in a minute, Leslie," drawled Lockwell, as he followed Frank, who led the way into one of the dressing rooms.

Merry closed the door and turned on Lockwell, who was startled and somewhat alarmed by the look he saw on the young man's face.

"Mr. Lockwell," said Frank, his voice having the ring of cold steel, "I wish to inform you that Miss Bellwood is under my protection while with this company."

"Really?" murmured Percy, in a manner

not calculated to soothe the feelings of the youth.

"She is a young and innocent girl," Frank went on. "She knows very little of the world and very little of the men of the world. As far as possible, I wish to keep her uncontaminated."

"Oh, she'll be sure to get a little soiled in time," yawned Lockwell.

Then he sprang backward, lifting a hand, for he thought Frank was coming at his throat.

"Be careful, Lockwell!" grated the youth. "I can't take much from you. You have been talking to Miss Bellwood."

"Well, haven't I a right to talk to her?"

"You went as far as you dared in your talk. You offered to buy her a diamond ring! You called her a peach! You said she was pretty enough to catch a man with money!"

"And so she is. Lots of men with money would be glad to marry such a pretty girl."

"You did not say 'marry' when you were talking to her; you said 'catch.' You might have meant marry. I do not say you didn't. What I want to say is this: I know it will be for Miss Bellwood's good for you to keep away from her. Do so! Do you understand?"

"Merriwell, you're jealous. You want to keep a good thing to yourself—you want to monopolize it. Now, is that fair?"

"I have said all I have to say to you. If you ever make such proposals to Miss Bellwood again, I'll break half the bones in your body!"

There was no mistaking Frank Merriwell's earnestness. Lockwell felt a chill creep over him, but he was determined to make a bluff of it.

"That is a nasty threat!" he exclaimed. "I won't stand to be talked to this way! I'll—I'll——"

"What?"

Lockwell had made a threatening move, but that one word checked him.

"Don't think I'm afraid of you," he sneered. "You're not so many. You'll find that out in time."

Frank opened the door.

"I have said all I have to say to you," he decalred. "You may go."

Lockwell walked out, giving Frank a look of deadly hatred.

CHAPTER IX.

EXPOSING THE RASCALS.

"I have invited Merriwell to come into the game to-night," said Parker Folansbee, after the play was over that evening.

"What!" exclaimed both Lockwell and Lawrence, to whom he had spoken.

"Yes," nodded Folansbee. "Got to talking with him about draw poker, you know. Why, he's a perfect enthusiast over the game. Says he used to play it at college. You know how many times we have wished for a fourth man in the game, as three-handed draw is such a mean game."

"But I'd rather have something to say about the fourth man," burst from Lockwell. "I know you think Merriwell is all right, but I am not stuck on him, myself. I don't fancy his society in a game of cards."

"Oh, you're prejudiced. He'll be all right."

"But he doesn't drink."

"He doesn't object if others drink."

"I don't want to play with him. Do you, Leslie?"

"Oh, I don't know," drawled Lawrence, much to Lockwell's amazement. "Almost anybody that can play will do to make up a good game."

"Why—why——" stammered Lockwell, and then stopped, catching a meaning wink from his rascally comrade.

"I'm glad Lawrence doesn't object," said Folansbee. "I've had beastly luck playing three handed, and I hope it will turn when we get another man in."

Later, when the "angel" was gone, Lockwell made a jump at Lawrence, exclaiming:

"What in blazes do you mean? What are you driving at? Why do you want Merriwell in the game? I hate the fellow, and——"

"All the better. He can't play against us both, any more than Folansbee. Here is our chance to sink the knife in him."

"But I hate him so I can't sit down at a table with him and——"

"Yes you can. You're smooth enough when you try to be. We'll join hands against both of these chaps, and we'll fleece them. Merriwell won't last long, and we'll freeze him out the moment his money is gone. Perhaps he will try to keep in a while by drawing on Folansbee. If he does, that will be all the better."

"But you are getting the best end of this."

"How?"

"You have made the most."

"Pure luck."

"But I don't like it."

"You may be the one in the future."

"I don't like the scheme."

"No?"

"Not a little bit. Hereafter we will each make what we can, but we'll divvy on the proceeds."

"Oh, I don't know about that!"

"I do. That's the only way I will play with Merriwell in the game."

Lockwell was determined, and Lawrence was forced to give in at last. Thus the two rascals formed a compact to rob Frank as well as Parker Folansbee.

That night the three, Lawrence, Lockwell and Folansbee were gathered in the room of the latter, and they had begun to wonder where Merriwell could be when there came a knock at the door. The "angel" opened it, and Frank came in.

"Hello, Merriwell, old fellow!" cried Lawrence. "Begun to think you wasn't coming."

"Yes," said Lockwell, as pleasantly as possible. "We were just getting ready to begin the game without you."

"We've been wanting another man for some time," said Lawrence. "Didn't suppose you ever played, as you seem to have no vices. I am astonished now when I think of it."

Frank laughed lightly.

"Poker has been one of my great faults," he confessed. "The game has a powerful fascination for me. Several times I have vowed I'd never play it again, but—well, here I am."

The men gathered about the table, and

Frank sat down smiling, tossing his hat aside.

Folansbee pressed a button before he sat down, and a boy appeared just as the cards and chips were brought out.

"What'll you have, gentlemen?" asked Folansbee.

Lockwell and Lawrence ordered, and then they turned to Frank.

"A seltzer lemonade," said Merry, rippling the cards.

"Oh, come!" exclaimed Lawrence. "We are all alone here together. It's all right, old man."

Then he turned to the boy, saying:

"Make it four whiskeys."

"Make it as many whiskeys as the gentlemen like," said Frank pleasantly; "but for me you will bring seltzer lemonade."

"Never saw a fellow like you, Mr. Merriwell," declared Lockwell, with an attempt to be jolly. "Do you always take your medicine straight when nobody is looking?"

"You have heard me say that I never drink."

"Yes, but we know——"

Lockwell stopped, with a little gesture that meant a great deal. The color was rising into Frank's cheeks, but still he held himself well in check.

"Please be good enough not to hint," he said. "If you have anything to say, speak out. I presume you are driving at the first night on the road."

"I didn't know but you would be touchy."

"Mr. Lockwell, did you see me take a drink of anything but water that night?"

"N—no."

"I thought not."

"But your illness. And your glass was half-full of champagne when you—when you—gave up."

"I do not know how that champagne came there. Perhaps somebody else does. I did not drink any of it. Come, gentlemen, if we are to play. Of course, Mr. Folansbee is to be the banker. He informs me the limit on this game is five dollars, and so——"

"We could raise the limit," Lawrence

broke in, "if it is not high enough to suit you."

"I am very well satisfied, as it is. To tell you the truth, I had much rather play a dollar limit game. But then, I have some money I can lose, if luck does not come my way. However, before we begin, I wish to tell you that I am lucky at this game. That is why it has such a fascination for me. I almost always win."

He was looking down at the backs of the cards as he spoke. Lockwell and Lawrence exchanged glances and winks. There was the shadow of a sarcastic smile on the face of each. Frank Merriwell would need to be pretty lucky to win against their combination.

"It will be a quarter ante, eh?" asked Folansbee, counting out and stacking the chips. "How many will you have, Lawrence? The whites are quarters, the reds halves, and the blues dollars."

"Oh, give me fifty dollars' worth," said Lawrence, producing a roll and tossing out two twenties and a ten. "Have you chips enough?"

"Well, I have three boxes of chips here. I think they will go round. Here they are. What will you have, Lockwell?"

"The same."

He counted out five ten-dollar bills.

"Now, Merriwell?"

"I think twenty-five dollars' worth will do me," answered Merry, laying down two tens and a five.

"Pretty light," murmured Lawrence. "Better take fifty. What if you get up against somebody with a good bucking hand?"

"I'll use money, if necessary. I have some left."

Frank displayed a wad of bills that made the eyes of the two rascals glitter greedily. He had been paid a week's salary and the royalties on his play for that length of time, and he was flush.

Folansbee took fifty dollars in chips, and then they cut for deal. It fell to Lawrence.

Lockwell made the ante. It was Merriwell's first "say."

Frank glanced at his hand and found three

queens. He stayed for fifty cents. Folansbee found two pairs, with aces at the head, and he made it a dollar. Lawrence came in, and Lockwell cracked it up another dollar.

"This is getting pretty swift on the first pot," laughed Frank; "but I think I'll have to make good and raise it two dollars."

Folansbee came in for the needed amount, as did Lawrence; but Lockwell raised five dollars.

Frank knew his three queens were good for another raise, and he pushed it the limit, although protesting that it was too much and showing signs of apparent excitement.

Lawrence and Lockwell were watching him, and both looked satisfied; for it seemed that Merriwell was easily excited.

Everybody made good, without a raise, and Lawrence requested them to call for their cards.

Lockwell took two, and Merry asked for the same.

"Well, that's pretty good!" exclaimed Folansbee. "That's first-rate for a man with two pairs, like me! This is swift!"

Then he discarded his small pair, held his aces, and called for three cards, hoping to get another ace. Instead, he got three trays, which made him a full house. He lay back in his chair, satisfied, and lighted a cigar.

Lawrence took one card, glanced at it languidly, then lay his hand face downward on the table.

"Your bet, Mr. Merriwell," said Lockwell.

"Well, I'll drop in a V," said Frank.

"I'll have to raise it the limit," declared Folansbee, finishing lighting his cigar.

"And I will drop out," said Lawrence. "I couldn't fill my four flush."

"Now this is a nice mess!" muttered Lockwell, again looking his hand over. "I wonder, Merriwell, if your threes are better than mine?"

"You will find out if you stay long enough," smiled Frank. "But there is another person in the game."

Lockwell made good and called, but Merriwell raised Folansbee's raise for the limit. Folansbee, confident that his full house must

win, came back with another five without hesitation.

Lockwell growled.

"How long are you fellows going to keep this up?" he asked.

"Hard to tell," answered Frank.

"Well, I guess I'm beaten. If I'm bluffed, you are welcome. I'll drop three nines."

Immediately Merry made good with money, and called.

"I was hoping you would raise again," said Folansbee, as he displayed his full house. How was that for a draw to a pair of aces?"

"That was splendid!" declared Frank, looking the hand over with admiration.

"I thought you would say so," said the "angel," starting to rake the pot in.

"Wait a minute," urged Merry. "I said 'splendid,' but I didn't say 'good.'"

"You don't mean that you can beat it?"

"Well, I have four soubrettes here," murmured Frank, displaying four queens. "Had three of them to start with, and the fourth joined them on the draw."

There were exclamations of astonishment as Frank gathered in the pot.

"Well, you are lucky!" cried Lawrence, in evident admiration.

"Is this what we're up against?" gasped Lockwell. "Why, my three little nines were not any good at the start!"

"Remember the old saying about the first hand," said Frank. "The man who takes the first pot always loses."

"Oh, that is nonsense!" cried Lawrence and Lockwell together.

Folansbee was so flabbergasted that he did not have voice enough to call "come" when there was a rap on the door. Lawrence did it for him, and the boy brought in the drinks.

"Just what I need," gurgled the "angel," as he grasped the whiskey. "That hand took the wind out of me."

All drank, Frank taking his seltzer lemonade and insisting on paying for the round.

When the boy was gone, the game was resumed.

Frank Merriwell had not been deceived in the least. He knew the cards had been stacked on him, and Lawrence had delib-

erately given him the "top hand." They had not expected he would call, but had fixed it so he would win heavily from Folansbee, while they would lose very little. Thus Frank would be "baited" at little expense to them.

The game continued with changing luck. Occasionally somebody would break out with an expression of surprise that Frank had called with the four queens given him on the first deal. The real secret was that Merry was not there to beat Folansbee, and he had given up the moment Lockwell "dropped."

Merriwell was very cautious, but he lost steadily after the first pot. At last, in apparent disgust, he called for another pack of cards. A new pack was brought, and the game went on.

Both Lawrence and Lockwell were disgusted, for they did not seem able to draw Merriwell in when they wanted him. Frank would lay down three aces without betting on them at all; but he did it when he knew they had been given him by Lawrence or Lockwell. He made no mistake, for, on every occasion, one of the two rascals had the cards to beat him.

At last the rascals seemed to resolve on chancing everything on one hand. Frank got two aces on the deal and two more on the draw. Folansbee was given four queens. Both Lawrence and Lockwell stayed in. Lockwell took one card. Lawrence drew three. Then there was hot betting.

At last Frank protested that he was reaching the bottom of his pile, and Folansbee seemed to begin to worry. The "angel" was wondering if it were possible somebody could beat him.

But Lawrence and Lockwell continued to raise. Frank saw they were pushing the thing for all there was in it. Merry knew what was going to happen, and he borrowed a hundred dollars of Folansbee.

At last Lawrence threw down his cards in apparent disgust, crying:

"It's no use! I'm a fool to try to deceive

"It's no use! I'm a fool trying to drive anybody with a full house!"

"I'll bet twenty-five dollars you can't turn those cards and show a full house!" cried Merry quickly.

Lawrence turned red, showed confusion, and then said:

"Oh, well, I suppose I have a right to bluff!"

"What kind of a bluff were you trying with a five-dollar limit and four in the pot, three others making good and raising every time? You are not a fool, Mr. Lawrence.

Somebody was to get the benefit of your constant raises."

"What do you mean?"

"I have said what I mean. What do you do, Lockwell?"

"I raise five dollars," said Lockwell, sharply.

"I call," said Frank, pushing up five,

"So do I," nodded Folansbee. "My, what a beautiful pot! One of us gets a haul."

"What have you, Lockwell?" asked Merry.

"A straight flush—three, four, five, six and seven of hearts. I reckon that wins. But you must have something good."

"Four aces," said Frank.

"Four queens!" groaned Folansbee.

"And the pot is mine," said Lockwell.

"No!"

Frank Merriwell shot to his feet, catching the hand that started to rake the pot in. "No!" he thundered, his eyes flashing, his manner accusing. "The pot is not yours! You cannot win a dollar of my money in such a crooked way!"

Then Lawrence seemed ready to jump at Frank.

"Keep that fellow off, Mr. Folansbee," advised Merry. "I will show you how you have been cheated! This is a robbers' game!"

"Curse you!" grated Lockwell, blue with passion. "Do you dare accuse me of——"

"Yes, you cheated! That hand is not the hand dealt you by your partner in crookedness, Leslie Lawrence! Look under the edge of the table, Mr. Folansbee, just in front of Lockwell's chair, and you will find a table hold-out, which contains the cards dealt to this fellow. He has been picking up this straight flush a card at a time, and he reserved it for use on just this occasion. He changed the hand given him in the deal for this hand. That is the game. Look!"

Frank swung Lockwell aside, and Folansbee, although somewhat dazed, looked as directed. He found a hold-out attached to the table and containing five cards.

Lawrence and Lockwell were exposed in their game. They were ready to do almost anything desperate, but somehow the look on Frank Merriwell's face held them in check.

"Go!" commanded Frank, pointing at the door. "The best thing you can do is get out. Go!"

"When Mr. Folansbee says so," said Lawrence, faintly. "I can explain all this——"

"Go!" cried Folansbee, flourishing his arms. "Go! Get out of here! You scoundrels! You have been cheating me! Get out!"

If Cliff Had Used a New Disguise Something Else Might Have Happened. See No. 30 of True Blue.

He literally drove them out of the room, refusing to hear a word in explanation.

When they were gone and the door was locked, Frank said:

"Now, Mr. Folansbee, we will divide the pot."

Folansbee protested that Frank should keep it all, as he had exposed the rascals, but Merry insisted on dividing.

Frank was well satisfied with the work he had done.

CHAPTER X.

A DESPERATE VILLAIN.

It was the night following the exposure of the rascals. The third act of "John Smith" was being played. It was the great sawmill scene, in which Frank was bound to a log that was being cut into boards by a huge circular saw.

Lockwell was playing the villain. He it was who was to knock Merry senseless in the old mill and bind him to the log. Elsie Bellwood was to smash in the door with an axe and save Frank just before the saw reached his head.

Not a word had been said to Lockwell or Lawrence about the outcome of the poker game the night before. It was absolutely necessary to retain the fellows in the cast of the play for a short time, at least.

Never had Lockwell played with such intensity as he did that night. The part made him hate the hero, who was Merriwell, and his hatred seemed the real thing.

The struggle came at last. Lockwell struck Frank down, dragged him to the log, bound him there. He drew the knots firmly, his eyes glaring with hatred. His lines caused him to shout:

"There, curse you! This will be the end of you! You will be out of my path forever! Die, die!"

Then he started up the machinery, and the saw began to cut through the log toward Frank's head.

There was a rapping on the door. Elsie was there. She had heard the villain's words, and she was calling to the hero.

No answer.

Then came a louder hammering on the door and more calls.

No answer.

Bang! bang! bang!

She was hammering on the door with the axe.

Soon the door began to fly to pieces, but the saw was dangerously near Frank Merri-

well's head, and Merriwell was really bound to the log so that he could not escape.

The audience was thrilled. It was breathless—it was nerve-tortured.

Bang! bang! crash!

In burst Elsie, but she was clutched by the villain.

This was in the play; but she was to break away from him after a short struggle and save Frank.

The axe was dropped, and the struggle continued. Elsie saw a terrible look on Lockwell's face, and she realized what it meant. In vain she struggled to break away. The man held her.

"Let me go—quick!" she panted. "If you don't, he will really be killed!"

"Let him die!" hissed Lockwell. "Let him die!"

There was no mistaking the fellow's murderous purpose.

Madly the girl tried to break away.

"Let me go!" screamed Elsie. "You wretch! He will be killed!"

Then, with a superhuman effort, she broke away. In a moment she snatched up the axe. Lockwell tried to grab her again, but she swung the axe aloft, screaming:

"Back, or as true as there is a heaven I'll brain you!"

He started back, and she darted to Frank's side, cut the ropes with the axe, and set Merry free, just as the villain rushed out.

The audience, thinking it all a superb piece of acting, shouted itself hoarse as the curtain fell.

Lockwell was not found after the play. He disappeared from the hotel, but he left a note behind for Frank Merriwell. Here is what he wrote:

"Curse you! My time will come! I have hated you from the first, but I grew to hate you more and more as I saw you succeeding and becoming famous. The poker game made me ready to have your life. Wait! I am not done with you. I drugged you at the supper and made them think you had been drinking. If I had not been in a hurry, I might have kept at you in that manner and disgraced you; but it was too slow for me. The saw did not finish you, but there are things that will. We shall meet again."

"Lockwell."

The End.

The next number (139) of the Tip Top Weekly will contain "Frank Merriwell's Father; or, The Man With Money to Burn," by the author of "Frank Merriwell."

HARD CIDER IS A DANGEROUS THING TO FOOL WITH. SEE NO. 30 OF TRUE BLUE.

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STREET & SMITH'S TIP TOP WEEKLY,
81 Fulton St., New York City.

APPLAUSE.

Gonzales, Texas., Oct. 10, 1898.

Street & Smith.

Dear Sirs: As we have seen no applause from this place we thought we would write and let you know that the Tip Top is read and appreciated here. In fact, it is the favorite. Wishing you much success, we remain, your pleased readers,

C. Baquet,
C. Ramsay.

We are glad to hear from all our readers. It will be noticed on this page that letters come to us from all over the United States.

Branchport, N. J., Oct. 14, 1898.

Gentlemen: I have been reading your Tip Top Weekly from No. 1 to 131, and think it is the best weekly paper printed. We have a club down here in Branchport, and I am president; my brother, John A. McGuire, vice-president; Frank Weisner, treasurer; Alfred Seaman, secretary, and the other members of the club are David K. White, George Weeks, Arthur Vannote, George A. McGuire, Mick Showler. I have never seen any letters from Branchport boys, so please put this in, as the boys will look for it every week. We are all under 13 years old. Yours, respectfully, Benjamin R. McGuire, President.

163 Seventh avenue.

We hope your club will continue to be successful. Doubtless you and all other members of clubs will be interested in the badge which we intend soon to supply.

Allow me the pleasure of saying a few true words of praise in connection with your Tip Top Weekly. I deem it the best book for young men ever published. It is a book that grows better every week. I would rather see Frank with Elsie in preference to Inza. Elsie is more loving
Theodore Frank.
Bridgeton, N. J.

I will take the pleasure of writing you a few lines congratulating you on the Tip Top Weekly. I would like to hear from Frank's college friends—Bart Hodge, Jack Diamond, Bruce Browning and others. I like Bart Hodge the best of Frank's friends. I would like to know something of May Blossom.
Jack Bishop.

Johnstown, Pa.

I have read a very great many of your Tip Top Weeklies, and think they are the finest libraries published. I am glad to know Frank will return to Yale. I hope when Frank marries he will marry Inza. I see in this number (132) a suggestion that you have made for Tip Top readers, a fine badge, and I think this a very good idea. I would like to know if you can furnish me back numbers and any quarterlies after Nov. 2.
W. W. D.

You can obtain now all back numbers of the Tip Top.

St. John, N. B., Oct. 25, 1898.

I would like to say a few words in praise of the Frank Merriwell stories. I have heard very nearly all of them, and only started last Spring. I think they are the best weekly published. They are also instructive. My parents at first would not let me read them, thinking they were the common trash, but I soon convinced them, for I gave them one to read, and they said they were all right for any boy to read. I am glad to hear Frank is going back to Yale, and will see his old friends again. Will you ever reprint 1, 2, 3 and 4, Tip Top Weekly?

N. L. Green.

The numbers you inquire for are now in print.

I am pleased to say that I have read the Tip Top Weekly from No. 1 to date, and I think they are the best papers published. As to the proposition about the badge for the Tip Top readers, you could get nothing better, and it will please all of the Tip Top readers, I am sure. Will you make it?

Carl Wicklund.

Des Moines, Ia.

Yes, we intend to issue the badge shortly.

I have long been an ardent admirer of your Tip Top Weeklies, and I think them a grand success. I think every American youth would do well to read them. There are hundreds of people in this city read them besides myself, and they all admire Frank Merriwell's brave and noble disposition. I myself and a great many others whom I have spoken to about it, wish Frank to find Elsie at the end of the year and become engaged to her, for I think there is no girl for Frank like Elsie. It would be a good idea to have Inza fall in love with one of Frank's Yale chums.

E. S. Arthurs.

Batesville, Ark.

Frank has already met Elsie, as you have probably seen. There seems to be a diversity of opinion in regard to Elsie and Inza.

I have read the Tip Top Weekly from 1 to date, and shall continue to do so, as I think it is the cleanest publication issued for American boys. Frank at Yale interested me the most, and I hope to see him back in college before long. Living in a city in which there is a college, I can appreciate how truthfully Frank's college life is portrayed.

James B. Hagin.

Schenectady, N. Y.

Mr. Standish has been and is careful to have every detail correct.

We have formed a club here called the Tip Top Literary and Athletic Club, and we all read the Tip Top.

Harry, Palmer.
Fred Forman.
Frank Dennis.
Tom Monroe.
Frank King.

Muncie, Ind.

Your club has our most sincere good wishes,

We have read the Tip Top Weeklies ever since they came out. We have read every number, and think they are fine. The R. R. have been good, equal to the bicycle series. We like Frank best in athletic contests. We wish he could meet Elsie. We think of Inza just as he does. We would like to hear of the Yale boys.

Oran Christy and Nola Brown.

Kokomo, Ind.

I have been reading your publication since Frank's misfortune, and find it one of the finest publications for the American youth. Tell us more about Inza and Bob, the newsboy, and Larry, the fireman.

Daniel Troy.

Ambler, Mo.

I have been reading the Tip Top Weekly for some time, and find it is the best boys' paper I ever read. Every boy should read them. There is a lesson in every copy. For a boy it teaches us how to be honest and upright in everything which we do. It is full of sport of all kinds. I hope we will soon hear from Frank's friends at Yale. They are such a manly lot of fellows. I am glad that Hans is an achter the staitsh on, as he calls it. George D. Dowden.

Montreal, Canada.

We want to express our thanks for the interesting moments passed by the reading of the Tip Top Weekly. We have read almost every novel in the market, but we have not found any that we like as well as the Tip Top Weekly. We would like to hear more of Inza Burrage and the college boys. We cannot hardly wait from one week to another. We would like to hear from the Dutch chase and Bar-

BY ALL MEANS READ OUR PREMIUM OFFER—SEE LAST PAGE.

ney Mulleg. Every number of the Tip Top Weekly points a moral, and the youth of this country could do no better than to strive, as far as in them lies, to emulate the noble example set by Frank Merriwell. Ed Brutchter and Charles Schanks.

Peoria, Ill.

We, the undersigned members of the Kranko Club of Albany, Mo., write to congratulate you upon the deserved success of your Tip Top Weekly. We are all constant readers of your Frank Merriwell stories, and always look forward to their coming with great pleasure. We think the Tip Top Weekly is equaled by no other publication of its kind in the United States. Wishing you unbounded success in the further publication of these stories.

W. Grubb.
Babe O'Malley.
B. J. Dorsey.
Reuben Cranor.
S. Harrison.
Joshua B. O'Malley.
Grant Herman.

Albany, Mo.

May you always continue to hold your good opinion of Frank. We think he deserves it.

We have read your Frank Merriwell books from No. 1 to 130, and think them the finest books for boys ever published. We would like to see his Yale chums on the stage with him.

A. M. Eyde.
D. J. Edwards.

Lancaster, Pa.

I think the Tip Top Weekly the best paper of its kind published. I like them better every week. I liked the last series better than any, I believe. I hope Merriwell will eventually marry Inza Burrage. I admire her pluck.

G. Stephens.

Augusta, Ga.

I have read every number of your Frank Merriwell stories, and I think there is not any weekly that can beat it. It is interesting from beginning to end, and when I start to read one I won't quit till I have read it through. I have read nearly every kind of weekly papers, but, as I said before, none of them can beat the Tip Top.

Ernst Swanson.

Chicago, Ill.

A large number of our young people and not a few older ones here are reading your Tip Top Weekly, and all think it the best paper for young people they ever have seen. We are buying about fifty copies at present, and look forward to their coming with much pleasure. We are all in love with Elsie Bellwood, and have been worrying about her not a little lately. We hope nothing has or will happen to her. She is just the kind of girl a young lady should be. I think Inza has the disposition of a girl who would overcome her feelings and love another fellow, but Elsie would not. I would like to see Inza get stuck on Bruce Browning, but in behalf of all the readers I know in this place, as well as myself, I hope Frank will marry Elsie Bellwood.

W. G. Gardiner, Me.

As we have stated frequently, no one knows yet whom Frank will marry, or whether he will marry at all. But we are always glad to have opinions.

I have been reading your Tip Top Library since it first appeared before the public, and I think it is one of the best papers published for the American youth to-day. Would like to hear from Frank's old Yale chums in his stage career.

Lee Hayden.

Mt. Lake Park.

Your wish, which is that of many, will probably be granted.

I have been a constant reader of Frank Merriwell since No. 1. I think them the best books published in America to-day. I certainly wish you would let Frank Merriwell and Klondike Kit meet some time soon, as I think it would interest every one of your readers.

Harrison Grant Ecker.

Colliers Town, Pa.

I am a reader of the Frank Merriwell stories, and am a great admirer of Frank. I would like to have him come to New Orleans, and I would also like to know if he will ever meet Michael or Bald in a bicycle race.

New Orleans, La.

Richard Viguera.

I have read the Tip Top from No. 31 to the present date, and I like them very much. I like the way Frank has of doing things, and I hope he will return to college soon. The president of our club, William Iby, and our vice-president, William Hayes, like them very much, and we are going to read them

to the last. We all crowd around our news depot to get them, when they arrive.

Edward Bon Morse.

Waltham, Mass.

We having been readers of your Tip Top Weekly for a long time wish to say that it is one of the best papers printed for American boys. When it first came out our parents objected to our reading them, but after reading one themselves they freely gave their consent. We hope to see Frank at college again soon. Will he go back? Hoping to hear from all of the boys soon.

Edward Johnston.
Samuel Floyd.

Apalachicola, Fla.

As I am a steady reader of the Tip Top, and think it the best weekly I can get at that price, I read the proposition of Mr. Lynn Hartley about the badges, so I think it would be a very good thing, and I hope you will push it as far as possible and succeed.

Harrisburg, Pa.

I have read all the Frank Merriwell stories from No. 1 to the present issue, and think them the best boys' weekly. I would like to hear of Elsie Bellwood and Bart Hodge.

Arthur Dewar.

Indianapolis, Ind.

Mr. Standish considers every request made, but of course all can not be granted.

I have read all your Tip Top books, and I must say they are the best I have ever read. Once I got No. 12, and my mother caught me reading it and tore it up. She said it was a novel. But I soon showed her what a nice book it was, and the whole family hardly can wait for the next one. I would like to ask you a few questions. 1. What is Frank's favorite sport? 2. Is Elsie dead? 3. Is Frank's father alive?

San Francisco, Cal.

Frank is fond of all many sports. We could hardly say which is his favorite one. Both Elsie and Frank's father are alive.

We have organized a football team, and called it Tip Top. We have played three games, and have won all three. We have read all the Frank Merriwell stories except No. 12. We think them the best boys' weekly published. We hope to hear from Bart Hodge, Diamond and all the rest of his chums.

Ralph tier, manager.
A. Dewar, captain.
C. Meikel, F. W., E. W.

Indianapolis, Ind.

Hurrah for your team! May you win every game you play.

I have read Tip Top Weekly from No. 1 to No. 132, and I find great interest in reading them. I like the stories of theatrical performances, but I think I like the stories of "Dear Old Yale" a great deal more. I hope Frank Merriwell returns to Yale soon, and will graduate with many honors. I hope to hear some more of Elsie Bellwood, for she is the girl for Frank.

K. W. Dick.

Chicago, Ill.

I have read a large number of Tip Top Weeklies, and think they lead all others. My father does not care to have me fill my mind with such trash, as he calls it, that is generally in the weeklies. I brought a Tip Top home one day, and he read it, and now he waits for it as eagerly as myself. He says there is nothing but lessons as to how one should carry himself, and that is what we need most these days. He also wishes to congratulate Mr. Standish on his ability and yourselves upon the success you have made of the Tip Top. I would like to get Nos. 1 and 2 quarterlies. Have you any on hand at present? If not, when will you have? If you are not going to keep them any more, can I get the single copies. Wishing Frank good luck in everything he undertakes, as well as yourselves, I remain, yours truly,

Norman Dickens.

92 South 41st avenue, Chicago, Ill.

P. S.—Do you think my writing will do for business?

N. F. D.

Your letter is much appreciated. We are always glad to hear that the fathers and mothers read and indorse the Tip Top. All the back numbers are now in print, and will be mailed upon receipt of order.

After just reading Mr. Lynn Hartley's suggestion in regard to having badges for the Tip Top readers, I for one indorse it, as undoubtedly will many others of the "Tip Top army." I agree with Mr. Hartley when he says that every story of the Frank

A Poor Little Cripple Beaten. Clif Was in a Rage at This. See True Blue No 30.

Merriwell series is just as good as a lecture or sermon. Mr. Standish, "The Story Writer of America," knows just what the American girl or boy likes to read, and by his writings he has received the blessings of thousands of parents. I am also an actor, but at present am studying for a stock company, which will go on the road some time in November, and for this reason I am taking interest in the present series, and I also indorse Miss Effie Jay's request. Would you think it advisable for any young man or woman to go on the stage? How can a reader communicate with Mr. Standish? In closing I will again express my heartiest congratulations upon your everlasting stories.

Willard E. Kerchival, General Delivery.
Minneapolis, Minn.

The suggestion of Mr. Hartley has met with such unqualified approval that we are now making arrangements with the largest manufacturer in the world to supply us with the badges. We will soon tell the Tip Top readers more about this. All letters addressed to the publishers are shown to Mr. Standish. The theatrical profession, like all others, must have its support, and where any particular ability is shown it should be cultivated. Your congratulations are much appreciated.

I take pleasure in writing this letter, for I have read all the numbers, and I also buy Diamond Dick, Jr., and True Blue weeklies. It is hard to wait till Saturday arrives, for I think all the readers wait patiently for it to come, and when it comes they are glad to read their favorite, Tip Top Weekly. Your stories are true to life, and the facts it gives are worth while knowing. I fully agree with Mr. Hartley about having a badge and password. Wishing success to all your publications, I remain, your constant reader.

Alex. Hesse.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

We thank you for your good wishes. See elsewhere on this page our replies regarding Mr. Hartley's suggestion.

We have read most of your Frank Merriwell stories. We are glad that Frank has met some of his old friends, and hope that he will soon meet them all. We think the Starry Flag Weekly is very nice, but there is not a weekly that can beat Tip Top. We are waiting for Frank to come back to Yale, for we think the college stories are the best, though all of them are fine. Wishing you success with all your publications, we remain, Frank's friends,

Dana Towne.
Ross Culp.

Norwalk, Ohio.

Frank will soon go back to Yale. Meanwhile you will find that his experiences will be highly interesting. The Adventure Weekly is no longer published, as it was replaced by the Starry Flag Weekly, a sample copy of which will be mailed you.

I would like to say that I for one am very much in favor of Mr. Lynn Hartley's proposition as stated in Tip Top No. 133, and would like to add that a grip be given along with the password. I think, as he stated, that the boys will join in one vast army of Frank Merriwell's admirers, and each one should do their best to increase the standard of the American boys, also the circulation of the Tip Top. You may count on my hearty support of such an organization, and I am sure I voice the sentiment of every reader of the Frank Merriwell in this city. Hoping the proposition will meet with success, I remain, yours truly,

J. G. Wieting.

Toledo, Ia.

We are considering the suggestion regarding the password and grip, and will have something to say to our readers about it very soon which we know will please one and all.

Having read your Tip Top Weekly for nearly two years I am convinced that it is the best weekly for the youth in America. The many adventures of Frank Merriwell are told in the charming manner of the author, who furnishes an ideal model for American boys, and I hope they will, as near as possible, pattern after him, as I do. I admire Frank Merriwell for that trait which causes him to be charitable and gentle to the poor and afflicted. I can scarcely wait until the dealer opens the package containing these charming stories. We have a Merriwell club here, and the members join with me in asking for more about Elsie, Inza and Little Nellie. Long life to Frank Merriwell. Samuel H. Allen.

President Merriwell Club.

Princeton, Mo.

You are evidently a very careful reader of the Tip Top, and note the strong points in them. All such letters are very stimulating to Mr. Standish.

Correspondence.

A. R. S., New Haven, Conn.—The publication to which you refer has been discontinued.

F. C. M., Chicago, Ill.—There is a recruiting station on Clark street in your city. Inquire there.

M. S., Bluffton, Ind.—To obtain a hammer for hammer throwing write to Spalding & Bro., Nassau street, New York.

C. E., Chicago, Ill.—You can obtain binders by writing to Street & Smith. Frank will return to Yale very shortly.

Many Readers.—All back numbers of the Tip Top are now in print, and we shall shortly be able to supply all quarterlies.

H. B. N., Martinsburg, Va.—Sir Julian Pauncefoot is the English Ambassador to this country, and his address is Washington, D. C.

F. B. Louisville, Ky.—Thanks for your suggestion. It shall receive due consideration. We intend to keep the Tip Top "always ahead."

R. M. S.—A boy 5 feet 9 inches in height, and a chest girth of 34 inches, is not badly proportioned; but a man of that height, if well developed, should show a chest expansion of 38 inches if not more.

A. E. D., Hyde Park, L. I.—You write an excellent business hand. Frank Merriwell is a character of fiction, but most of his exploits are founded on fact, and there was a real boy who furnished the basis for Frank.

Huron, S. D.—To remove a wart, cover the skin around the wart with lard, apply over the surface of the growth one or two drops of strong hydrochloric or nitric acid, then keep the part covered up until the scab separates.

Jack Diamond.—A Congressman cannot appoint a boy to the naval academy unless the boy passes his examination. You are too young to enlist in the navy, but you might enter as an apprentice—that is, if you can pass the physical and mental examination.

Tip Top Correspondent.—To remove rust from nickel plate grease the rust stains with oil, and after a few days rub thoroughly with a cloth moistened with ammonia. If any spots still remain, remove them with dilute hydrochloric acid and polish with tripoli.

N. S. K., Baltimore, Md.—The governor to an engine is an apparatus for regulating the supply of steam. When a machine is going too fast the balls fly out by centrifugal force and shut off a portion of the steam; when too slowly they fall back, and, opening the valve, let on the steam again.

H. G., Milwaukee, Wis.—Frank is supposed to weigh about 160 pounds. He will undoubtedly find his father again, and will probably marry, but whom we cannot say. He does not know himself yet. The fastest time for running 100 yards was made by H. Bethune in 9½ seconds. B. J. Wefers, an amateur, has also the same record.

J. V. S., Meriden, Conn.—The principal languages are the English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Portuguese. The progress of languages spoken by different nations during the past century is said to be as follows: English, an increase of 312 per cent.; Russian, 120 per cent.; German, 70 per cent., and Spanish and French, 36 per cent.

Marion D., Naperville, Ill.—If you have a male canary and it don't sing, it is safe to presume that the bird is sick. Place a little saffron in the water, a little nourishing food in the cup, and set the cage in the sun for an hour or two for a few days in succession. If the bird does not warble after following the above directions, you can rest assured that it belongs to the female sex.

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The earlier issues of Tip Top Weekly are now on sale in the form of Quarterlies, each including 13 consecutive issues of this favorite weekly, together with the 13 original illuminated illustrations, and an elegant cover in colors. The price is 50 Cents per volume, for which sum they will be sent by mail post-paid to and address in the United States.

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No. 2, "	Nos. 27 to 39 of Tip Top Weekly.
No. 3, "	Nos. 40 to 52 of Tip Top Weekly.
No. 5, "	Nos. 53 to 65 of Tip Top Weekly.
No. 6, "	Nos. 66 to 78 of Tip Top Weekly.
No. 7, "	Nos. 79 to 91 of Tip Top Weekly.

Nos. 1 and 2 out of print.

If your Newsdealer has not got the Quarterlies, remit direct to the publishers,

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History tells us that wrestling was the first form of athletic pastime. Without doubt, it gives strength and firmness, combined with quickness and pliability, to the limbs, vigor to the body, coolness and discrimination to the head and elasticity to the temper, the whole forming an energetic combination of the greatest power to be found in man. The book is entitled PROFESSOR MULDOON'S WRESTLING. It is fully illustrated, and will be sent postpaid on receipt of ten cents. Address

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(Manual Library Department).

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Complete in No. 5 of the TIP TOP QUARTERLY, with all the original illuminated illustrations. Admirers of Frank Merriwell should have this book by all means.

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yb

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... OUR NEW PREMIUM ...

War-Graph of the Battle of Manila.

Messrs. Street & Smith have made arrangements to present a War-Graph to every reader of their popular publications for boys. The conditions are easy. Read them.

We publish four 32-page, illuminated cover weeklies for boys, retailing for five cents each, as follows:

The True Blue,
The Tip Top Weekly,

The Nick Carter Weekly,
The Diamond Dick, Jr.

We wish the readers of one series to become acquainted with the entire line. On and after the present date the coupon at the foot of this column will be printed in each one of the above-mentioned publications. Three coupon's each clipped from a different publication, mailed to our office, accompanied by a two-cent stamp, will entitle you to his premium, sent to your address, post-paid, free of all expense.

DESCRIPTION OF THE WAR-GRAPH:

A new article, just introduced, giving in a series of thirty colored pictures a graphic portrayal of the Battle of Manila. These pictures show in succession the cause of the war, the entry of Admiral Dewey's fleet into Manila harbor, the first shot, the various scenes of the battle ending in the downfall of the Spanish flag, and the triumphant floating of Old Glory, followed by a portrait of our hero, Admiral Dewey, Uncle Sam spanking the boy king of Spain, and finally ejecting Spain from Cuban soil. These pictures are small but very interesting, and are fastened together so that by a rapid motion they can be operated similar to a Mutoscope.

A very interesting collection of pictures.
Certain to please every one of our readers.

We will send one postpaid to anybody who complies with the conditions as stated in the coupon below.

You can secure as many war graphs as you desire, provided you send sufficient coupons and stamps, provided each of the set of three is from a different publication.

Send in your coupons. Remember this is a purely gratuitous gift on our part, intended to call your attention to others of our publications besides the ones you are now purchasing. If you cannot procure what you desire from your newsdealer, send us twelve cents and one coupon, and we will send you by return mail a copy of two other publications and the war-graph. Address your coupons to

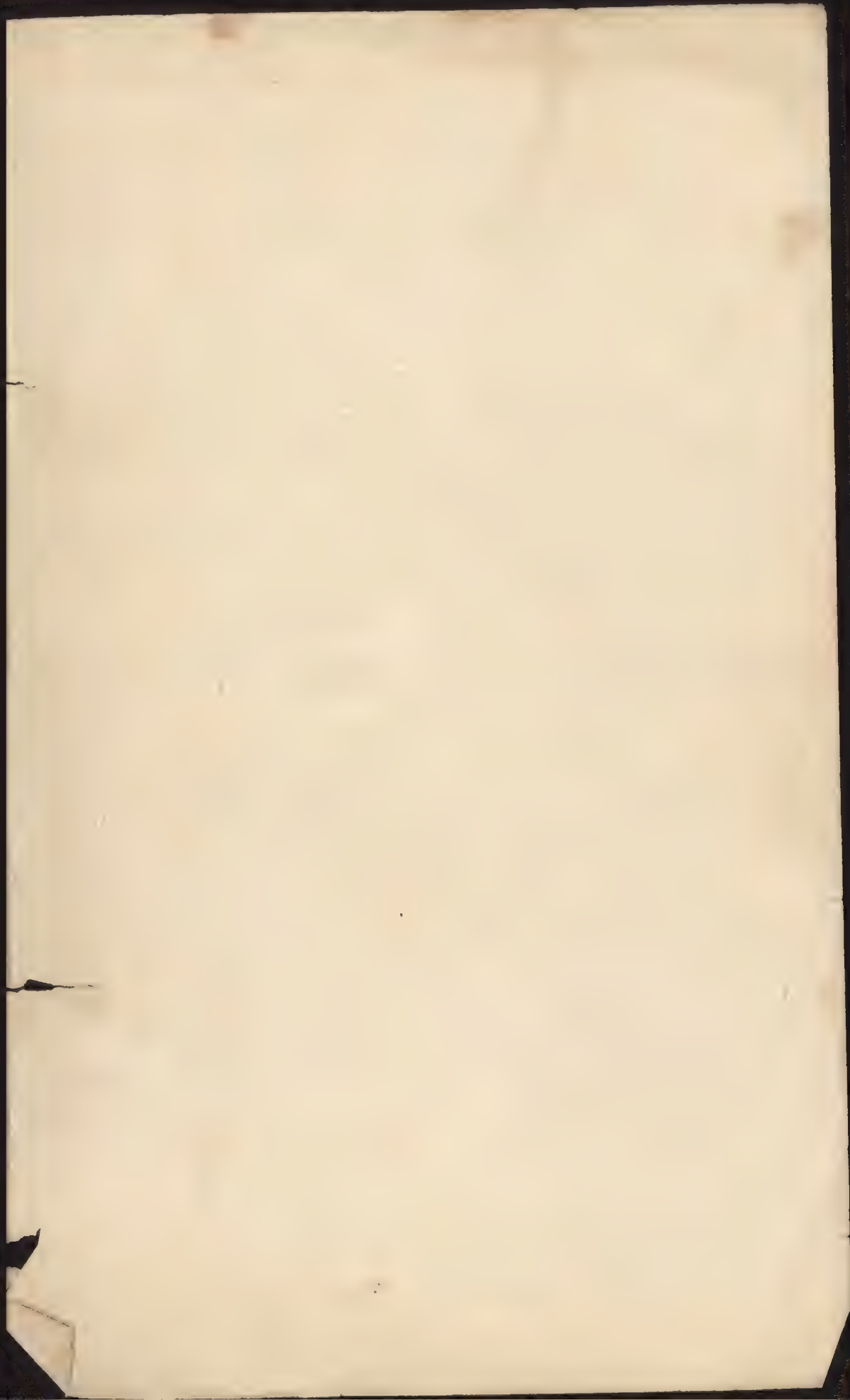
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Coupons published previous to the following numbers are not good under this offer: 127 Tip Top, 101 Diamond Dick, 19 True Blue, 90 Nick Carter.

"Patriotic Badge Coupons" published in previous issues of these publications will not be received for badges after Oct. 1st, 1898.

TIP TOP WEEKLY COUPON.

This coupon, accompanied by two others, each from a different one of the following publications: True Blue, Nick Carter Weekly, or Diamond Dick, Jr., entitle the sender to the premium we offer, if a two cent stamp is also enclosed to pay for postage and packing.
STREET & SMITH.



CATALOGUE OF FRANK MERRIWELL STORIES IN TIP TOP WEEKLY

1. Frank Merriwell; or, First Days at Fardale.
2. Frank Merriwell's Foe; or, "Plebe" Life in Barracks.
3. Frank Merriwell's Medal; or, "Plebe" Life in Camp.
4. Frank Merriwell's Rival; or, By Fair Play or Foul.
5. Frank Merriwell's Fault; or, False Steps and Foul Snafes.
6. Frank Merriwell's Frolics; or, Fun at Fardale.
7. Frank Merriwell's Mysterious Rings; or, The Man in Black.
8. Frank Merriwell's Fag; or, Fighting for the Weak.
9. Frank Merriwell's Furlough; or, The Mystery of the Old Mansion.
10. Frank Merriwell on His Mettle; or, Field Day at Fardale.
11. Frank Merriwell's Fate; or, The Old Sailor's Legacy.
12. Frank Merriwell's Motto; or, The Young Life Savers.
13. Frank Merriwell in New York; or, an Unknown Foe.
14. Frank Merriwell in Chicago; or, Meshed by Mysteries.
15. Frank Merriwell in Colorado; or, Trapping the Train Wreckers.
16. Frank Merriwell in Arizona; or, Mysteries of the Mine.
17. Frank Merriwell in Mexico; or, The Search for the Silver Palace.
18. Frank Merriwell in New Orleans; or, The Queen of Flowers.
19. Frank Merriwell's Mercy; or, The Phantom of the Everglades.
20. Frank Merriwell's Friend; or, Muriel the Moonshiner.
21. Frank Merriwell's Double; or, Fighting for Life.
22. Frank Merriwell Meshed; or, The Last of the Danites.
23. Frank Merriwell's Fairy; or, The Hermit of Yellowstone Park.
24. Frank Merriwell's Money; or, The Queen of the "Queer" Makers.
25. Frank Merriwell's Mission; or, The Mystic Valley of the Andes.
26. Frank Merriwell's Mysterious Foe; or, Wild Life on the Pampas.
27. Frank Merriwell a Monarch; or, The King of Phantom Island.
28. Frank Merriwell in Gorilla Land; or, The Search for the Missing Link.
29. Frank Merriwell's Magic; or, The Pearl of Tangier.
30. Frank Merriwell in France; or, The Mystery of the Masked Unknown.
31. Frank Merriwell's Feat; or, The Queen of the Bull Fighters.
32. Frank Merriwell in London; or, The Grip of Doom.
33. Frank Merriwell's Venture; or, Driven from Armenia.
34. Frank Merriwell in India; or, Hunting Human Leap-ards.
35. Frank Merriwell's Vow; or, After Big Game in Ceylon.
36. Frank Merriwell in Japan; or, The Sign of Avenger.
37. Frank Merriwell's Dead Shot; or, Roughing it in Australia.
38. Frank Merriwell in the South Sea; or, Cast for Life.
39. Frank Merriwell at Home Again; or, The Mystery of Ethel Driscoll.
40. Frank Merriwell at Yale; or, Freshman Against Freshman.
41. Frank Merriwell's Match; or, The King of the Sophomores.
42. Frank Merriwell's Victory; or, The Winning Oar.
43. Frank Merriwell's Finish; or, Blue Against Crimson.
44. Frank Merriwell's Game; or, Snaring the Sharper.
45. Frank Merriwell's Run; or, Frowning the Tigers.
46. Frank Merriwell's Even Up; or, Squaring the Score.
47. Frank Merriwell's Queen; or, Blow for Blow.
48. Frank Merriwell's Find; or, The Wail of the Train.
49. Frank Merriwell's Racer; or, Birds of a Feather.
50. Frank Merriwell's Nerve; or, Game to the End.
51. Frank Merriwell's Shadow; or, The Mysterious Stranger.
52. Frank Merriwell's Dash; or, Yale Against the Field.
53. Frank Merriwell's Bicycle Boys; or, The Start Across the Continent.
54. Frank Merriwell's Ride for Life.
55. Frank Merriwell's Great Capture; or, Bicycle Against Horse.
56. Frank Merriwell to the Rescue; or, Through Fire and Water.
57. Frank Merriwell's Close Call; or, The Tramp's Token.
58. Frank Merriwell's Unknown Friend; or, Old Friends in New Places.
59. Frank Merriwell Among the Rustlers; or, The Cattle King's Daughter.
60. Frank Merriwell's Desperate Drop; or, Wild Adventures in the Rockies.
61. Frank Merriwell in the Mines; or, The Blind Singer.
62. Frank Merriwell Among the Mormons.
63. Frank Merriwell on the Desert; or, The Mystery of the Skeleton.
64. Frank Merriwell's Underground Search.
65. Frank Merriwell in California; or, The End of the Great Tour.
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By Author of
FRANK MERIWELL

"LET ME GO!" SCREAMED ELIZ. "YOU WRETCH! HE WILL BE KILLED!"



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FRANK MERRIWELL'S FAME; OR, THE ROAD TO SUCCESS.

By the Author of "FRANK MERRIWELL."

CHAPTER I.

AFTER THE FIRST ACT.

"Author! Author!"
It was the opening night of Frank Merriwell's play, "John Smith of Montana," and the theatre of the Missouri town where the play was produced for the first time was packed.

The curtain had gone down on the great sensational sawmill scene at the end of the third act, and the audience had roared its approval, being roused as no audience had ever before been aroused in that town.

Again and again Frank and Elsie Bell-wood had been called in front of the curtain to bow before the applauding people, and it seemed that the spectators never would be satisfied.

And now they were shouting for the author of the play.

"Oh Parady's Disappearance, or, The Naval Cadet's Double Championship"—No. 30 True Blue

The advertising had announced that "John Smith of Montana" was a new drama, and would be produced in that town for the first time. Having by their applause placed their stamp of approval on the play and the leading actors, the audience was determined to have a look at the writer of the piece, not knowing that the star of the cast was the author.

Behind the curtain there was nearly as excitement as in front.
The people in the cast had been in hard luck nearly all the season, barnstorming in the Middle West, and there had been many doubts about the outcome of the new venture.

Now, however, these doubts were dispelled, and the actors and actresses saw visions of a prosperous finish of the season, big houses, rushing business, and the "ghost" walking regularly every week.

They danced and laughed, shaking hands with each other. The leading lady, sedate



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